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TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

AUGUST SEVENTH 1918

VOL. 49 - NO. 4

20 Cents

A Novel by
Howard Fielding

A Novelette by
Francis Lynde

and other A-1 stories

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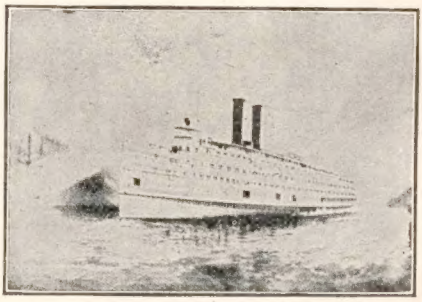

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TWICE A MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XLIX. AUGUST 7, 1918. No. 4.

The Plot of Number Eleven

By Howard Fielding

Author of "The Indiscretion of Holy Burgoyne," Etc.

It is a long time since we have had such a unique mystery presented to us. Those who relish puzzlement and baffiement will get all they want in this story. Fielding is a master when it comes to spinning a web of hidden design. We will not spoil the fine glamour of the tale by even hinting what it may hold, but there are several points we should like to settle, and which we see no way of reaching, to wit:

Will blondes like the yarn more than brunettes? Will people of mixed strains of blood agree or disagree with the author in his racial distinctions?

These questions have little bearing on the power and charm of the narrative, but out of curiosity we are led to ask them.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

THE KINDNESS OF MR. CALDWIN.

THE tenth annual reunion and banquet of my college class broke up about five in the morning. By nine I was at work, and the day was hard throughout, at the hospital, at my office, and wherever I made calls upon patients; and by evening I was very properly tired. Alone in my apartment I dined on dry toast and a bottle of milk; and then sat for a while at the table, in the light of the reddest sunset that ever turned the heavens to blood. I was thinking of the quick success that I had made in my profession; wondering whether it would have led to anything really big, if I could have gone on with it; whether anything would be left of my practice when I came back from France; whether I should ever come back.

The telephone bell rang, and I went into my office hoping that somebody had got the wrong number. I would rather it were that than a munition maker with appendicitis, an operating case and no chance to get any one but me. In fact, I hesitated some time beside the instrument before answering —so long that I expected to hear a voice sputtering with impatience. On the contrary, I was addressed in the serenest manner, a most gentlemanly tone:

"Is the doctor in? This is Mr. Caldwin speaking."

It was a man who had sat nearly opposite me at table last evening and a good part of the night; one whom I had not known well at Harvard, nor ever seen again until that dinner. If he hadn't given me his name, I might have searched my memory in vain for it, but his image was clear to my mind's

eye—a tall, wiry fellow, with black hair on a small head; yellow-hazel eyes, and a womanish forehead with beautifully arched eyebrows; a Welsh type, if anything.

"Present, and at your service," said I. "How are you, Caldwin? Fully recovered, I trust."

"Oh, yes, thank you," said he. "I'm perfectly fit, and chipper as a lark. But Billy Ward isn't; he's really ill. I've been trying to straighten him up, but it's not a case for a layman, I'm afraid. Would it disturb you much to come down?"

"Down" meant about six miles for me, from my office on One Hundred and Sixtieth Street to the Astor where Ward was staying. He lived in Boston, and had come over for the dinner. I was tempted to suggest that the resident physician of the hotel would have my completest confidence in treating Billy for what ailed him; but while I hesitated Caldwin spoke again:

"It's inconvenient for you, of course, but Ward has a prejudice against New York doctors; he says there isn't one of them that's fit to treat a Boston bull pup, except you. Excuse me just a moment. I think I'd better go into the other room and see what he's doing."

A brief silence; then the gentle voice untroubled by the slightest trace of irritation resumed: "Pardon me for making you wait, but I thought Ward had fallen over the foot of the bed. He's a little out of his head, poor chap."

The suavity and kindness of this gentleman shamed me from my first intention. I said something quite decent to him about his services to our esteemed classmate in distress, and promised to take the job off his hands in half an hour.

"Thank you very much," he said. "Awfully good of you. I'll stay, of course, till you come." He gave me the number of the suite, and said he'd leave the door of the sitting room unlocked, so that it wouldn't be necessary to take his eye off the patient in order to let me in.

Very thoughtful of Caldwin; it saved me the trouble of sending up my name. I went direct to Ward's apartment, and entered unannounced and unheard. From the threshold of the bedroom I saw Ward sitting up in bed, earnestly engaged in making a speech. Caldwin, in a chair beside the bed's foot and smoking a cigarette, seemed to be listening with a courteous show of attention. When a flicker of sense informed Ward of his true posture, inappropriate to postprandial oratory, and he tried to get on his feet—probably for the five hundredth time—Caldwin restrained him skillfully and with angelic patience. Several degrees of fever assisted Ward to imagine that the banquet was still in progress, and when he caught sight of me by the door, he called out to me not to go home so soon.

Caldwin, thus made aware of my presence, seemed to wake from a dream with an odd movement of the shoulders, like a shudder. He rose, and greeted me with his habitual politeness. While shaking hands with him I discovered that he had a good-sized burn on one of his fingers, which he himself seemed not to have noticed. On my calling his attention to it, he said that he must have done it with his cigarette while making Billy sit down. He had no interest in the subject, and went on to speak of Billy, saying:

"Another fellow was with him most of the day, but he had to go. I met him downstairs, and he told me that Billy had a bad hold-over; he'd been trying to steady him with absinth frappé, but it didn't work; so I came up to see what I could do, and I haven't been successful. He's got much worse."

I was not surprised to hear it, in view of the treatment; nevertheless I was able to discover troubles not spirituous in their origin. There was nothing serious to be anticipated, but our friend was in for an illness of some days, and would require a good deal of attention. I gave him something to quiet him, and then telephoned to a nurse who promised to come at eleven o'clock. It would not be wise to leave the patient alone during the interval, and I was afraid it was up to me to sit

in that room all the evening. Caldwin had already taken his hat and stick; he was standing by the bed looking down at Ward who was sinking into uneasy slumber.

"Shall you stay till the nurse comes?" Caldwin asked.

"Somebody'll have to do it," said I; and with that he laid down his hat and cane on a table.

"If you'd rather not," he said with languid good nature, "I'll stay. What shall I do if he wakes up?"

"I don't believe he will. If he does, just keep him quiet. I'll look in at eleven o'clock."

"Very well," said he; and he sat down in the same place and attitude as when I had first seen him.

I escaped, feeling like a guilty dog. It had been my plan to go home and spend an hour with business papers and problems, since it was now impossible to go to bed at once and get up early for this work. On the street a great clock in an electric sign informed me that it was later than I had supposed—after nine in fact. It was hardly worth while to go home; I was on the point of returning to relieve Caldwin's guard. I couldn't get rid of the idea that he had unselfishly given up something that he had wished to do. But I didn't go back; I wandered into the Star Theater like a truant child.

The first evening performance was drawing to a close. Presently a thousand persons went out, and fifteen hundred came in. I sat in a balcony box toward the right of the house, and gloomily wondered what I was there for. The divinity which shapes our ends, if we share *Hamlet's* belief in that matter, knew the answer to my question, but I did not.

After the second performance began, I was aware of a young lady sitting in one of the boxes at the side, quite near me. So far as I could see, she was alone. The seats in those boxes are sold separately, I believe, but of course it is possible for one person to buy them all.

Seen in profile, in the dim light and at that distance, the young lady looked extremely beautiful, a creature of a very superior type. Her hair of pale gold seemed faintly luminous, and with the delicacy of her facial outline and the unusual whiteness of her skin, it gave her an ethereal not to say ghostly appearance. But I shall never be too nervous to welcome the advent of a ghost who looks like that, come when and where she may, in murder-haunted mansion or the loneliest churchyard at midnight.

A little later, when I glanced in her direction, my beautiful ghost was eating candies—which seemed to destroy more than one of my illusions with regard to her. She offered the candies to another person who had come into the box, but this individual was at the back, and invisible to me.

CHAPTER II.

THE MASTERPIECE OF ARCHIBALD GREW.

I stared for some moments while the lamps which had softly lighted the body of the house during an orchestral number were extinguished for a picture. Then I faced to the front, and saw upon the screen these words:—

KAM'S CONDENSED THRILLERS
(No. 11.)
"A Rich Man's Heart."
Scenario by Archibald Grew.
Direction of Theodore Kam.
Photography by Harris C. Kam.

I was somewhat amused by the name Kam, which I happened to have run across in the dictionary, but I hoped for no amusement from the "condensed thriller," and was a little surprised that any play so crudely designated and titled should be shown in so good a theater. Some minutes later I apologized, mentally, to the management and to the producing firm of Kam, for the piece proved highly entertaining.

It was a murder story so direct and startling that I wondered how it had eluded the censor, but it possessed remarkable merit, which not even the direction of Theodore Kam could wholly obscure. It was plausible, sin-

cere and human, and what is even more rare in photo plays, it showed a knowledge of artistic principles. The viewpoint moved with intelligence and continuity; it was possible to follow the thing through without having one's attention scattered like an idiot's. I began to suspect that Archibald Grew was the budding Shakespeare of the movies, and that if he had been permitted to direct and photograph his own play, as well as write it, we might have had a masterpiece.

The bare bones of the plot were not strikingly original, but they were clothed with an astonishing reality. A peculiarly smooth and impenetrable rascal of a nephew coveted the fortune of a rich uncle, a kindly old fellow, whose goodness was not dragged in for exhibition but was disclosed in a few scenes which advanced the story and gave us a pretty view of the heroine besides. She was distantly related to the old man, treated by him as a daughter, and named in his will as coheir with the nephew whom she had somewhat reluctantly promised to marry.

The uncle had a weak heart and a confirmed habit of smoking. His doctor had told him what was going to happen if he didn't stop, and had compromised by putting him on an allowance of three cigars a day. The old man didn't know how to live without a cigar in his mouth; couldn't read, couldn't think, unless he smoked. He tried pathetically to make one cigar last from dinner till bedtime; he smoked it to the tiniest butt end, impossible to hold except on the point of a pin. And all this was shown concisely and deftly; the condensation of Mr. Kam's thriller was a genuine artistic compression, resulting in that illusion of self-actuated and genuine conduct of which I had never before seen the slightest trace in a picture play. One could feel the old man's integrity and sense of discipline in the way he stuck to his regimen, and the girl's affection in the way she looked at him while he was about it; while the nephew, smooth as a snake, was all the time watching, and thinking in his wicked inside.

What the nephew did as a result of his cogitation was to devise a scheme for nullifying his uncle's newly acquired moderation in the use of tobacco. He provided himself with a tiny vial whose contents was announced to the audience in a title as nicotine. With a delicate hypodermic syringe he injected this drug into all his uncle's cigars on the top row of the box, and they were not mild after that; each of them was stronger than ten had been before, if the dose was what it seemed. But because the uncle was an indurated smoker the difference was not remarked by him, except for a little extra relish.

One evening the girl went to the old man's study to express some qualms about the approaching marriage, and to find out once more how much his heart was really set upon it. The doctor was there, just taking his leave. He was in love with the girl, and she was more than half in love with him, but had given him no encouragement.

The chance encounter with her proper mate gave the girl additional strength to lay her case before the old man. He listened with more emotion than he cared to show, covering it now and then with hasty puffs at his cigar, burned down to almost nothing on the pin's point. The nephew nearly walked into this scene, but checked himself, and stood watching and listening. When the last of the cigar, a mere speck, was consigned to the ash tray, the hidden watcher nodded to himself with the ghost of a smile.

The uncle pleaded for the nephew, earnestly and successfully, and the renewal of the desired promise was on her lips as she gave him both her hands. He bent over her hands to kiss them, and his head fell slowly forward with increasing weight. She caught him in her arms, lifted him, spoke to him in vain. He was dead.

The nephew entered as if in answer to the girl's cries. He showed not the slightest sign of guilt either then or afterward; the startings, hand clenchings, and sidelong looks of the stage villain were agreeably absent. His inmost private feeling seemed to be sat-

isfaction, a cool elation. Outwardly his manner was so sympathetic, kindly, and at the same time so suave, that I was powerfully reminded of Caldwin—in fact this character became Caldwin in my mind as the play proceeded.

The doctor was recalled; he found death in exactly the form which he had long expected. He seemed to be a good enough doctor, but he saw nothing suspicious, and I couldn't blame him. Meanwhile, the nephew had deftly got away with the poisoned cigars from the top row of the box in his late uncle's desk; the others had not been drugged, and he felt safe. No chemist would ever find anything in the body or even look for it. That part of the fatal cigar into which the poison had been injected had been consumed by the victim, and though the vapor of the drug would have condensed in the unburned portion, how much of it would there be in such a stub as Uncle John had left? Half the fortune was now neatly won; the other half could be got by marrying the girl.

The only person who entertained the least suspicion was the bride to be, and she had no reasonable grounds, no evidence at all; nothing but pure intuition. Her sense of rational justice would not permit her to condemn the nephew on such a fanciful indictment, but the inward whisper that this man was a murderer made the thought of marriage horrible.

He found reasons for urging haste, and except for the imaginings that tortured her, she would not have opposed him; but these, added to the increasing conviction that she loved another man, drove her into a kind of insanity. In that state the dead seemed nearer to her, and her promise the more sacred.

Finally, she agreed to set the marriage date, but she imposed conditions. He must promise that after the wedding they should return to that house and live for two weeks as they had lived before, not as if they were man and wife. This scene took place in the girl's private sitting room, and in the midst of it she opened a silver box on a table, took out a cigarette, and lighted it.

He was politely surprised—Caldwin to the life; I resolved with chortlings of glee that he should see this play. The girl told him that she had smoked cigarettes for more than a year, but had succeeded in hiding it from every one except the doctor. He had found it out, and had warned her that she had the same heart weakness as her adoptive father, and was in danger of the same fate. The nephew was apparently affected with a natural alarm and grief which he expressed very gently, as I could fancy Caldwin's doing it. This began to be uncanny, the more because there was no physical resemblance, and the effect seemed not to be due to the actor's own conception; it seemed rather to have been written into the part, so that the performer fell into it unconsciously in the more salient scenes.

The nephew accepted the conditions which the lady imposed, and the marriage was quietly solemnized. Subsequently the lady was seen in her own sitting room, cutting cigarettes in two, and burning the ends in a flame, after which she put them into ash trays; but she never smoked except when the man who was now her husband was admitted to that room. At such times he saw evidence that his wife consumed a great many cigarettes. It was noticeable that he did not remonstrate.

Some days afterward, the lady took all the cigarettes from the top row in the little silver box, and gave them to the doctor who subjected them to a test then and there—and though the chemistry was too fast for real life, it was based on accurate knowledge. The test revealed the poison, and the doctor understood how it had been injected into the cigarettes. Obviously the uncle had been murdered by the same device.

The girl heard her husband's voice outside, ran to the door and listened; then signed to the doctor that the man was coming. The doctor hastily hid his chemical apparatus; put back the cigarettes into the box, except the one that he had tested; and posed the girl in a chair as if she were dead.

The murderer knocked. The doctor shouted to him to come in. He entered; and his surprise and grief were admirable. The doctor kept him from approching too near the girl, and gave him a chance at the cigarette box. The trick worked; the villain took the poisoned cigarettes out of the box; and then the doctor held him up at the point of a gun, and denounced him for his crime. The guilty man was caught with the evidence in his pocket; the cigarettes were now as fatal to him as he had meant them to be to the girl; and he had to stand there with his hands aloft while she called the police by telephone.

A few closing scenes foreshadowed the satisfactory end of the story, the conviction of the murderer, the annulment of the marriage, and the union of the girl with the man she really loved.

I saw the fortunate conclusion with less interest than it deserved, my mind being occupied with a very strange matter. At the point where the nephew's murderous design was first revealed to the spectators, it had come into my head that he was making a mistake, a very natural one, because its avoidance would have required special knowledge. There is a very rare alkaloid, similar to nicotine in toxic action though by no means identical, which would have served his purpose better; would have been far less likely to be noticed by the smoker, and virtually certain to escape the observation of the family physician or a coroner. Let us call it exine.

This was only a passing thought, but it was recalled in a surprising manner by the chemical test performed by the stage doctor. Beyond question I recognized this process, though so little of it was shown in the brief time at Mr. Archibald Grew's disposal. It was a recent effort of some chemist's ingenuity, of small importance, and known to few; but by mere chance I had read a description of it.

And it was not a test for nicotine but for exine! I was constrained to infer that the talented Mr. Archibald Grew could have committed his stage crime with the last refinement of perfection, if he had chosen to display his knowledge of chemistry to the vulgar herd.

CHAPTER III.

HOW FARES MY LADY?

Unusual applause showed that Kam's Condensed Thriller had been appreciated. I glanced across at my ghost lady to learn how she had been impressed, and saw hardly more than one white hand with the glove turned back on the wrist. The hand lay quiet on the arm of the chair, but the lady was withdrawn beyond my field of vision. From time to time, while a popular singer occupied the stage, I glanced toward my lady and saw her hand always lying in the same position, as if it were a carved ornament of marble. Apparently she was now alone, the other person having gone.

In the adjoining box, toward the stage—my lady's being the last in the line—there was a party of actresses and actors, some of whom I recognized, including one young man of considerable note. At the close of the song this party applauded generously, and one of the young women, while leaning forward over the rail, happened to turn her head in such a way that she had a view of that neighbor beyond the partition, who sat alone. I think this actress must possess very promising gifts of expression, for her startled countenance told so much to me in a single instant that I was prepared for all that followed.

She rose, and spoke hurriedly to the young actor, and a moment afterward I saw both of them in the other box. He bent forward over the chair in which my ghost lady sat, then stepped to the rail; and I saw him take breath, preparing to speak. He would have asked if there was a doctor in the house; and knowing that he would not wish to startle the audience in this way, I rose and made a sign to him. He saw me, and responded with a gesture of comprehension.

There was another volunteer, an acquaintance of mine, as it happened—

Doctor Linden, connected with the Polyclinic Hospital. From what part of the theater he came, I did not observe. He overtook me within a pace or two of the box.

Several young women were clustered at the entrance, too frightened to go in; but the one who had given the alarm was supporting my lady's head on her breast, and wiping her lips with a handkerchief. I noticed that the handkerchief was darkened, but not with blood; in fact the lips were stained with chocolate, indicating the suddenness of the attack, whatever its nature might prove to be, for unconsciousness had come while she was eating a piece of candy.

She was in a coma indistinguishable from death, upon a first examination. I found the teeth very tightly clenched; indeed, they had closed with such violence that one of the incisors was broken at the edge. And I remembered that this sudden snapping of the teeth together is alleged to be a characteristic of poisoning with exine, though the records of the drug's effect on human beings are almost a blank. Certainly I should never have thought of exine, except that I had just been reminded by the picture play that such a substance was known.

There was ample reason to believe, however, that the condition resulted from one of those exceptionally violent toxic agents which act instantly upon being taken into the mouth, and cause death by paralysis of the nerves controlling respiration. I saw nothing on which to base a hope, nor did Linden, but we felt it to be our duty to make an effort toward resuscitation.

Two ushers had now come, one of them bringing a glass of water, for it was supposed that the lady had fainted. He suggested that we carry the lady to an office of the management on that floor—probably desiring to prevent excitement in the audience; thus far there had been very little.

"We shall take her to a hospital," said I. "Will you go down to the entrance and have a cab ready?"

Meanwhile Linden, who had his pocket emergency kit, was busy with his hypodermic syringe. When he had administered the dose, I lifted the patient in my arms. She seemed light as a child, though she was of good height and not fragile; with much strength in her rounded slenderness, if ever the arrested current of her life could be released. I felt grief for her, an irrational sense of personal loss. As I turned with her, a man obstructed me momentarily, offering his help, and justifying his interference by showing a badge. I didn't care who he was, nor listen to what he said, but my memory retained the fact that he was a detective from the district bureau on Forty-seventh Street, and that he had happened to be in the audience. I left him with Doctor Linden who remained to search for anything that might have contained poison, and especially to gather up the candies which had been spilled in a chair beside the one in which the lady had sat.

There was another detective, outside the box, but he preferred not to disclose himself, seeing that I had no need of him. The young actor was making a path for me through the increasing assemblage of the curious.

In the midst of this press I noticed two men, I can hardly say why—perhaps because the taller of them reminded me of Caldwin, though much older. I got the impression that he was affected by something stronger than idle curiosity; that he stared at the woman in my arms with an acute personal interest. In the moment when my eye was on him he turned, and spoke in his companion's ear:

"You're crazy. It couldn't have knocked her over like this."

I didn't wait to form any reasonable judgment as to what the words meant. Believing that I had to do with a cowardly and damnable murder, I was impelled by the instinct of retribution; and here was a person with evidence of some sort, even if it went no further than the identity of the victim. I could not pass on and let the man be lost in the crowd. Instead I turned aside and confronted him.

"Will you come with me?" said I.

"You seem to know who this young woman is."

He looked as if he had been struck by lightning.

"I—what? What do you mean?" he stammered.

"I mean that you'd better come," said I; and he came. Whatever may have been in his mind, the most potent impulse was the desire to avoid debate with me in the presence of so large an audience. He and his companion fell in beside me, but at the head of the stairs where there was another crush of persons, and my attention was fully occupied, they eluded me and disappeared.

Before the entrance I found a cab waiting, and the usher beside it. He had proved himself prompt and intelligent. I said to him, after putting the patient into the cab:

"Telephone to the Astor, suite 307, and ask Mr. Caldwin to bring my bag to the Polyclinic Hospital, as fast as he can. Tell him what has happened, and say that there is something in the bag that I want to use."

I gave him my name, and he repeated that, and Caldwin's, and the number of the suite. Then Linden came, accompanied by the detective whom I had seen in the box. He rode with us to the hospital, and waited in an anteroom on the chance that the patient might revive and speak.

Barely three minutes after our arrival I was informed that some one from the theater wished to see me. I supposed that it was the usher, and that there must have been a failure to deliver my message to Caldwin. In fact it was the man, but that was not his errand; he had come with a diamond ring of considerable value which had been found in the box. Why it was not held at the theater or given to the police I do not know. I gave the man a small reward, in case there should be an etiquette in such matters, but his behavior showed that I had misjudged him, and that there was no mercenary element in the procedure. He told me that he had talked with Mr. Caldwin who had promised to do as I requested.

"He said: 'Give the doctor my best wishes for his success and the young lady's recovery,'" the messenger added, thus unconsciously authenticating his report.

The diamond seemed to be the token of an engagement, unfulfilled, for my lady had worn no other. It was inscribed within, "Clement to Anna; 6-1-16."—June first, of the preceding year. I put the ring into my pocket, and at that moment Caldwin entered the room bringing my bag.

"Ah, doctor, were you waiting for me?" said he. "I couldn't make the cabby go any faster. What is the chance for your patient?"

"Not my patient now," said I, "though I shall return to her in a moment. Everything possible is being done, of course, but there is no encouragement."

He walked with me toward the room where my lady lay.

"Poor girl," said he. "Have you any idea what made her do it?"

"Do it? What do you mean?" said I. "She didn't do anything. Some damned rascal poisoned her."

"In a theater?" said he. "How extraordinary. I thought it must have been a suicide."

"It wasn't," said I, laying my hand on the door.

"But what became of the fellow? Was he arrested?"

"He got away; temporarily."

"Yes; of course," he assented. "He'll be caught easily enough. I infer that there was no chaperon, but somebody must know who escorted the young lady to the theater. It's no use running away, I should think."

"Are you going back to the Astor?"

Caldwin was turning as I opened the door.

"Straight," said he. "Ward was getting bad again. He slept only a little while after you left."

"I'll come down as soon as I can," said I. "Thank you for bringing my bag, though there's nothing to be done, I'm afraid."

"I'll take it back, if you like," said

he, putting out his hand; but I retained the bag, thanked him again, and went into the room.

CHAPTER IV.

DOCTOR LINDEN MILDLY OFFENDS.

There was nothing for me to do except to concur presently in the opinion of the other doctors that my lady was beyond recall—probably had been so, indeed, from the first moment. My suggestion that exine would prove to have been the lethal agent was favorably received, though one of the doctors had never heard of the drug, which may give some idea of its rarity. It is in fact a chemical curiosity, without any known use, difficult to make, and virtually impossible to buy, since only some chance experimenter would ever have any of it.

The others were much interested in what Linden and I told them about the photo play, but it seemed absurd to suppose a connection. There was nothing in the play about exine, except that strange business of the test which I had recognized through having happened to run across an article on the subject in a chemical magazine not long ago; but Linden, though much better read on poisons in general, said that he had seen the play without being reminded of exine, and had got his first hint from me.

There was clear evidence as to the manner in which the poison had been administered. It had not been mixed with the substance of the candy, but had been contained in a capsule, portions of which we had recovered from the mouth of the patient. A small piece of the candy had also remained in the mouth, having been cut off by the spasmodic closing of the teeth. The larger part had been found on the floor where it had fallen from the dead hand.

The ring must have been taken off. It had fitted quite closely; no accidental movement would have caused it to slip from the finger. This was the hand that I had seen to lie so still, supported by the arm of her chair.

She had worn no other articles of jewelry except a brooch, which bore no inscription; but there was a locket, antique and of quaint design, in a silk bag which she had carried. The locket held a photograph, apparently her own likeness taken five or six years ago. On the bag the initials A. K. were embroidered, and the same letters were in monogram on a handkerchief. There were no cards, no letters nor writing of any sort. Some bills and silver amounted to about five dollars. She was dressed richly and simply—the clothes of a woman who has genuine æsthetic sense and can afford to gratify it.

My colleagues were inclined to see in the taking off of the ring a hint of suicide. There was reason to believe that she herself had removed it; and the act, immediately preceding her death, seemed significant, pointing to a romance which had ended in disappointment and grief. Doctor Linden supported this view with more insistence than was characteristic of the man.

"The young lady has suffered great mental distress," he said. "This is evident on comparison of her face with this portrait." And he was right; there was an anxious, haggard look, indicative of a prolonged strain, though the beauty of the facial outlines had prevented me from remarking this on the more distant view of her, in life.

"She was a person of exceptional refinement," he continued. "Isn't it unusual for a young woman of this quality to eat candies in a theater? It seems to me quite probable that she had them with the idea of saving herself from the taste of the poison, not knowing how quickly it would act. Women often do such things—try to avoid some minor discomfort at the last moment; even when they seek death by means that are utterly horrible."

"She didn't do it, Linden," said I. "Your statements contradict your theory. You're surprised that she should have eaten candies in a theater, and yet you're willing to believe that she chose to make a public spectacle of her own death."

"Yes; it seems strange," he admitted. "Still, some sudden impulse——"

I reminded that nobody can get exine on a sudden impulse. Its use indicated a deliberate and difficult effort toward a definite manner or aspect of death, inconsistent with any motive for taking her own life which this young woman could have had.

"She may have wished to counterfeit a natural death," he suggested, "and have chosen the place in order to make it seem more plausible."

"But you can't counterfeit a natural death by taking exine in a capsule of that sort, even if you swallow it whole. You might as well hold the bottle in your hand."

"True," said he, "but a murderer would have been confronted by the same difficulty. He seems to have used a rare alkaloid for the purpose of avoiding detection, and then have made his act obvious through the manner of administration."

"What's the inference?" said I. "The murderer meant this to seem a suicide."

The retort was too hasty. Linden detected the flaw in it and shook his head.

"Then why exine?" said he. "By your theory he accomplishes nothing in the way of secrecy, and needlessly raises the question—where did she get such a substance?"

He had me cornered, and he pursued his advantage with that peculiar softness of persuasion in which he is admittedly unrivaled—his nickname in student days was "Soothing Sirup," his real name being Samuel S.

"The capsule was pressed into the end of a piece of candy," he said. "You saw the imprint in the part which I found. Surely this seems to have been her own act."

"It doesn't seem so to me. The whole capsule was imbedded in the candy; it was *hidden*. Why should she have done that? If she meant to make the bitter dose less shocking, the way to do it was simply to put the candy into her mouth first."

"Yes; that's true," said he; "but she was excited, of course; her impulses were not normal. As to the drug, it may develop that she had special means of getting it. I speak in perfect ignorance as to that," he added, "not knowing even who she is; but it's possible, of course."

His soft persistence irritated me, his manner of seeming to agree with me while contradicting all that I said. I was unwilling to continue the argument. I took him by the arm, and led him to the side of the bed, not with the thought of adding effect to what I was about to say, but because I wished to look at her once more before leaving the room. Linden came reluctantly, but aside from the difference in our bulk he was far too gentle-mannered to resist.

"It's none of my business, Linden," said I, "but something impels me to defend this girl. She is innocent; absolutely without fault or stain in this matter. She has lost her life by the act of a coward and scoundrel. I shall do what I can to find him, and put the branding iron right on his forehead."

Linden raised a soothing hand; then used it to push back the hair from his brow.

"I have an odd feeling that it will be difficult to find this man," said he; and after a pause, "Shall we go?"

In the corridor we met an orderly with a message for us from the detective who had ridden with us to the hospital. Him we found at the telephone, communicating with his superior in the bureau. The latter desired to speak with Linden and me, and would greatly prefer a personal interview in his own office. I expressed my readiness to go at once, but Linden pleaded professional duties which would detain him for a few minutes. He suggested that I go alone; he would follow presently.

CHAPTER V.

THE POSITION OF ARCHIBALD GREW.

At the entrance of the police station a detective was waiting to receive me, the one whom I had failed to notice at the theater. He mentioned his presence there, by way of introduction.

"Then you must have heard me speak to a man who might have been a valuable witness in this case," said I. "Why did you let him get away?"

"I let him go as far as a fire exit," said the detective. "That's what he made for, him and his side partner. Anxious to get out, and afraid of running against you at the entrance. While I was asking them what was their hurry, I noticed the little actress—you remember her?—watching us very close. She'd started to follow you, but had switched off after these men, the same as I had. She picked the taller man as the one she saw in the box with that lady."

"She saw him there?"

"So she says; but this man has a pretty good alibi. There's his friend, of course; also a few reliable witnesses. I went to where the two of them had been sitting, and got names of several parties who back this man's story that he didn't get out of his seat till after the trouble was discovered."

"When did he get into it?"

"About the time the second performance started," he replied, "and that won't do. The actress saw the man in the box just as the Kam play went on the screen."

"Yes," said I; "he was there for at least ten minutes, after that play began. I can't say how much longer."

"And I understand that you didn't see him—only knew she wasn't alone. He must have kept mighty well under cover. We can't find anybody but the actress who saw him in the box, but there's one that saw him going toward it. He'll be here soon, to look at your man."

"My man here? You arrested him?"

"No; I invited him. He couldn't explain his conduct, and there's no doubt he's in the case somewhere. You sized him up good. He knows the lady. We've pinned that onto him."

He had been leading me slowly rearward in the building, and had now paused outside a closed door. I suspected that he had been blamed for some detail of conduct in this affair, and that he had obliged me with all this information in order to create good feeling on my part, as I was about to confer with his superior. Before I could ask any more questions he opened the door, and stood aside for me to enter.

Instantly, I saw the two men who had been "invited." The shorter sat disconsolate on a bench—a somewhat oily and unsavory person. The taller seemed to have been walking the floor, engaged in a fruitless wrangle with a police lieutenant who sat behind a desk at the far end of the room. Both disputants had the look which results from turning over and over the same matters in the mouth till they clog the dry throat. I perceived that my man was not quite a prisoner, yet was striving in vain to get away, the lieutenant detaining him by force of argument alone. The victim of this situation recognized me at once as the cause of his woe, and greeted me with a baleful glare.

He had rumpled the hair over his forehead, and I now noticed that it was streaked with gray, augmenting my impression that he had grown older in the brief interval since our encounter. His resemblance to Caldwin was thereby diminished; at best a racial rather than a personal likeness, based upon deep essentials of character which the face imperfectly revealed and the irritable manner tended to conceal.

The lieutenant gave me a seat beside him, and addressed me in a half whisper so difficult to follow that I had little attention left to frame a question of my own. I gave him a brief account of the case in its medical aspect, as he seemed to desire that first.

"What makes you so sure it's a murder?" he inquired.

I cited my observations of the young woman's behavior; the apparent desire of the man to avoid being seen; his disappearance; and the extreme difficulty of obtaining the poison which had caused death.

"Is it used in photography?" he asked.

"No," said I. "What made you think of that?"

"It would be a point in the case,"

he said, "a point against this man. He admits having known the woman, though at first he denied it. We got him on that. He tore a half leaf out of an address book which he carries, and tried to dispose of the piece. My man got it."

The lieutenant pushed a small, crumpled bit of paper along the desk till I could read the name, "Miss Agnes Carey," and an address on Fifty-fourth Street near Fifth Avenue.

"When this was put up to him by me," said the lieutenant, "he admitted that it was her name and address, and that he'd had business dealings with her. I tried to get the Fifty-fourth Street house by telephone, but couldn't raise anybody. I've sent an officer over there; he ought to be back now. The house has been occupied for some years by a dressmaker, Madame Jeune; real name Mary Young. I got that from the telephone office. This man says he didn't know those facts; had never called at the house nor seen the young lady except at his own office."

"Her initials are A. K.," said I, "and the name on her ring is Anna. She has probably given this man an assumed name based on the sound of her own, as is commonly done."

"Yes; that's how I figured it," he responded dryly. "I never knew Carey to be spelled with a K."

I reverted to his question about photography, and asked what had been in his mind.

"This man," said he, "is Gregory S. Archer. He's connected with the Kam Photo Play Company."

I stared at him, unable to accept this as a mere coincidence or to comprehend it in any other aspect.

"What does he say about the play that was shown to-night?" I demanded; but the lieutenant hadn't heard of Kam's Condensed Thriller, No. 11. His two detectives had seen no connection between the picture and the crime; it had never entered their heads to mention Archibald Grew's drama to their superior officer who listened with unconcealed amazement to my hasty sketch of the plot.

"Mr. Archer," he called, "will you kindly step this way?"

Archer turned with a jerk. He had been whispering earnestly, leaning down to his friend on the bench.

"I understood from Mr. Jacobson"—the lieutenant pointed with his thumb to the man on the bench, and addressed Archer as he came toward us—"that you went to the Star to-night to see a play of which you are the author."

"Well? What of it?" Archer rejoined, looking as if he didn't love his friend for having given this information.

"Happening to mention that fact to the doctor"—a wave of the hand toward me—"I learned that the Kam play to-night was written by Archibald Grew. Is that one of your names?"

"Not exclusively," said Archer. "It's an office signature. We ran some one-reel pieces a while ago, mostly comic, and put the name 'Archie' on them, changing it to Archibald later. When we developed that series into the Thrillers, and they began to make a hit, we filled out the name."

"I see," said the lieutenant. "Archibald grew."

"Precisely. That's the origin of it."

"Then you wrote that piece about the cigars poisoned with exine?"

"With *what?*"

"Exine."

"I don't know what you mean," said Archer. "I never heard of any such dope. It's nicotine in the play. There's a title that tells what it is."

I ventured to put in my oar.

"Did you write the directions for the chemical test in the last part of the play?" I asked.

"In a general way. Why?"

"Where did you get the material—the chemistry?"

"Out of a book in the library," he replied, without sufficient thought. The man was pretty well rattled.

"Under nicotine?"

"Why, of course."

"What was the name of the book?"

Archer was beginning to turn green. He wet his lips before replying.

"I've forgotten. Some schoolbook on chemistry."

That was ridiculous. The test was so recent that it probably hadn't yet been published in any book, certainly not in an elementary treatise. Archer was lying; he couldn't have found that test anywhere except with definite mention of exine, and with the plain statement that the object was to distinguish exine from similar alkaloids, especially nicotine. This was the sole value of the test.

"Didn't you consult the chemical periodicals?" I asked.

"What for?" he retorted angrily. "All we wanted was something that would look right. That's a screen play; it isn't a lecture on chemistry. I merely made suggestions, and left the details to our director."

"There's a copy of the play in your office, I suppose," said the lieutenant; and Archer answered that he didn't think so; it had probably been destroyed. He gave this reply in such a tone that Jacobson—who also was connected with Kam's scenario department—could not fail to hear; but in his excitement Archer raised his voice so much above the natural volume that he might as well have turned and told Jacobson to get into the office at the earliest possible moment, and make away with all copies of Thriller No. 11. The lieutenant smiled grimly with a part of his face, but the remainder continued to register a dire perplexity.

The trouble was that Archer had lied like a guilty man, but at the same time had revealed a genuine ignorance which seemed to make him incapable of this crime. His few words of truth counted so heavily that they made the total record stand in his favor. Sincerity could hardly be more manifest than Archer's when he said that he had never heard of a drug called exine; and the whole course of his defense had been such that I would have made oath for him in any court that he knew no chemistry.

Yet the man was not scared by a mere chance connection with this dangenerous affair; his mental attitude was plainly that of the Irishman in the classic story who, on his way to trial, was told to be of good courage for justice would be done him. "That's just what I'm afraid of," he responded. I had fairly well come to the opinion that Archer was innocent of the murder. Then what manifestation of justice did he dread?

I had leisure for these reflections because the lieutenant's telephone had rung, and he had sent Archer back to the bench while answering. A hand on my arm had detained me as I was rising, so I overheard a part of the conversation, the full substance of which was presently disclosed to me.

The man sent to the address of "Agnes Carey" reported that he had found no trace of such a person. Madame Jeune had gone to the theater and probably to supper afterward. Her mother was at home, however, and had sent word from her bed that Agnes Carey was unknown to her, by name or description. The detective was waiting for Madame Jeune herself.

Archer was recalled, and informed of this report. He responded that the address had been correctly copied in his book from Miss Carey's dictation. That was all he knew about it. Miss Carey had come to his office two or three times to inquire about scenarios—what sort of stuff was desired, the prices paid, and so forth.

"I believe she turned in one manuscript," he said, "but she was wholly inexperienced, and naturally it was no good. That was the report to me; I didn't read it myself."

"And that's the whole of your acquaintance with her?"

"Absolutely all," said Archer, but his eyes shifted all over that end of the room.

"In the hearing of this witness"—the lieutenant indicated me with his eloquent thumb—"you said to Mr. Jacobson, 'You're crazy. It couldn't have knocked her over like this.' What did you mean?"

"We thought she'd fainted, and Jacobson said he guessed it was the heat."

"That's nonsense, of course," said I. "It wasn't hot enough to hurt anybody."

"Just what I said to Jacobson," responded Archer. "I told him he was crazy."

Jacobson, being called, corroborated the story with the easy manner of one to whom lying is habitual and pleasant.

At this point word was brought that the expected witness waited in the outer regions; whereupon some dozen officers in civilian dress were brought into our room. Archer made no protest against any particular of the arrangements for the attempt at identification, but contented himself with advising the lieutenant not to try "any of that forced-draw stuff." I thought he spoke from irritation, merely to be disagreeable, but in fact he meant business. The witness, entering, hadn't got his feet across the threshold before Archer took the floor for a few heartfelt words:

"I won't stand for this frame-up, Coffey," he cried to the lieutenant. "Can it! What do you mean by line-up stuff, when the man knows me by sight? He's seen me often at the theater. Is he fixed?"

The lieutenant was somewhat taken aback; he hadn't sufficiently considered Mr. Archer's fame in certain circles. The witness, replying to a question, said that he knew the gentleman, by sight, as Archibald Grew who wrote scenarios for the Kams.

"When and where did you last see him?"

"At the theater to-night. He was sitting with that gentleman," pointing to Jacobson. "It was the same time that I saw the other man, the one who went to that box."

The lieutenant turned to Archer.

"Grand frame-up, isn't it?" he said. "Next time don't yelp till somebody steps on your paw."

Archer seemed relieved, but not very much. It was plain to me that the police had not found out the point of his weakness; he was masking it successfully; he was on the lookout for tricks, and guarding his whole line, but the attack which he really feared had not yet been delivered.

CHAPTER VI.

THIS IS THE MAN.

Lieutenant Redfield led the witness to the desk, and questioned him in my hearing. He was an usher at the theater. His station this evening was on the lower floor, but he went upstairs on some trifling errand shortly after the opening of the second performance. Among the persons ascending ahead of him was a man who did not especially attract his attention till they were on the gallery floor.

"Then," said the witness, "I noticed him because he picked up a fan that a woman dropped. He caught up with her, and spoke; and she turned round as if she was going to have him arrested. She had her mouth open to harpoon him when she saw the fan in his hand. 'That's mine,' says she; and grabbed it; and scooted for a seat.

"He behaved very easy and gentlemanly. I thought he might be an actor; there was two parties of them in boxes on the right. I watched him when he went that way, thinking I might get a look at his face, and perhaps know who he was. But I didn't. The last I saw of him he was turning to go into the first box—the one where the lady sat, as I learned afterward."

The witness was vague as to all details of personal appearance, but we got a hazy picture of a man near to six feet in height, rather lightly built, not over thirty-five years old, with dark hair. He wore a sack suit, black or dark blue, "real clothes; no fifteen-dollar stuff;" and a straw hat with a straight brim.

He was about the same size as Mr. Grew, and somewhat similarly dressed, but the witness was not aware of any other resemblance. Long before the crime was discovered the usher had returned to the lower floor, and he had seen virtually nothing of the subsequent events.

"Thank you. That'll be all," said the lieutenant. "You may go."

The witness crossed to the door which was opened as his hand touched the knob. Doctor Linden entered, and

halted, seeing his path blocked by all the men who had assisted at the attempted identification. Grouped in a kind of squad, preparatory to leaving the room, they had the look of being engaged in some professional ceremony.

"Do I intrude?" said Linden; and I gave his name in an aside to the lieutenant who called out: "Not at all. Come right in."

It seemed that everybody got in Linden's way as he came forward, but he moved among them with the ease of an expert dancer on a crowded floor.

I introduced him to the lieutenant with whom he shook hands, somewhat to the latter's surprise; and we fell into conversation. In the midst of it I noticed that our witness had not left the room, but was watching us intently from his place by the door. Presently he came forward, and pointing his finger at the middle of Linden's back, said with considerable dramatic effect:

"This is the man."

I believe he had conceived the idea that Linden's entrance had been prearranged, and that this was the person whom he was expected to identify; but he was perfectly honest in the matter, not merely anxious to oblige the police. Still, he was like a schoolboy doing a sum whose correct answer he supposes that he has seen on another boy's slate; no doubt he will work it out that way, if he can. This had not been hard for our witness. Linden's figure and clothes, and especially his manner, were genuine points of resemblance, and confirmed the guess which his opportune entrance had inspired.

This identification capped the climax of ridiculous failure. I doubted that the police would dare to hold Archer, unless the detective who had been sent to the home of Madame Jeune should discover something of importance. I was anxious not to miss hearing his report, but there was something else in my mind, something too fantastic to be called a theory, yet I was more and more obsessed by it. Under its influence I asked leave to withdraw. There was no use waiting to hear Linden tell his story; I knew already that it would not advance the investigation.

The case had opened very badly for the police. Their two witnesses had made something far worse than a mere failure to identify a suspected person; they had flatly contradicted each other, and both were in error, in my opinion. They were now on record, and their value was virtually destroyed, even though they should really recognize the right man to-morrow. Yet it was from their testimony that my nightmare of a theory had sprung.

The actress, with only a casual glance, had seen a man in full face, sitting quietly in a very dim light. The usher had seen him as only a figure in action, and had retained the impression of a tall, dark-haired man with fine manners. Putting the two together, I had the portrait of an individual with somewhat the look of Archer, and somewhat the deportment of Linden. His first name ought to be Clement, to accord with the inscription on the ring, but there my theory seemed to fail. An uncertain memory rejected Clement or any possible abbreviation, and groped after a very short word with a different sound. This fact tended to support the verdict of reason that the whole theory was nonsense. Nevertheless, I took the time to consult the city directory in the Hotel Astor before going up to Ward's apartment. This is what I found:

Caldwin, Clement D., residence, Eighty-fifth Street, near Riverside Drive.

The initial D gave me the name I had been trying to remember—"Dal" Caldwin. So he was called in the old days; never Clement in my hearing. It came to my mind that I had once seen his signature, beginning "C. Dallas." And with that the next entry caught my eye:

Caldwin, Dallas J. & Co. (Dallas J., deceased, 1916; Clement D., successor). Drugs and chemicals.

Certainly, I could not have pursued my crazy theory at all without a notion of Caldwin's having some knowledge of chemistry; but I had supposed it

would be secret, perhaps very hard to discover. I had looked in the directory for his name alone. He had impressed me as an idler, a man with a living income or allowance, and without a profession or serious business interests. He looked as little like a druggist as any person of my acquaintance, male or female; and he had tended Ward for some hours, giving him no medicine merely because he didn't know what was the matter with him. He must be a superdruggist.

The directory gave me the address of Caldwin's store, on Amsterdam Avenue, in the Eighties, and of a laboratory on the side street—probably a separate entrance to the same building. A man may be successor to a druggist, seemingly a near relative, and not know much about drugs, but in connection with the laboratory Caldwin's name appeared once more, followed by the words "analytical chemist."

Exine no longer presented any difficulties as to the possibility of getting it; the private laboratory settled that matter. But there remained the baffling question propounded by Linden: what was the supposed advantage of this rare alkaloid, administered in such a manner? The capsule would inevitably indicate the use of poison, and though analysis might fail to reveal its nature, the fact would still be plain that an extremely unusual drug had been employed. If the murderer were a layman, this might be in his favor; but to a chemist it would be precisely the most fatal clew that he could leave. Taking the ring and the poison together —connecting Caldwin with the victim and with the lethal agent of this crime —and it would seem that he might as well have pinned his business card to the girl's dress.

Thinking of these matters as I went up to Ward's rooms, I doubted that escape had been a feature of the murderer's plan. The hazards seemed too great to have been accepted by a sane person. Possibly Caldwin had held the gate of death from shutting after her, meaning to pass its threshold before dawn.

This might account for his incredible coolness when he came to me bringing remedies—means for the recall of that spirit which he had driven from its fair white temple. In memory I saw him standing with me outside the unlatched door on which my hand was laid; hearing the soft sounds made by those who toiled within that room; not knowing at what instant I should open the door upon the pitiable sight beyond. I tried in vain to remember any unnaturalness in his manner, any overacting. Perhaps there was something hasty and too serviceable in his offer to carry my bag back to the hotel, but that was quite in character for the man.

CHAPTER VII.

A BLUE ALIBI WITH GREEN STRIPES.

Entering Ward's sitting room, the door being still unlocked, I saw the nurse whom I had summoned; she was at the telephone, trying to call me at the hospital. I did not wait to ask any questions, but went through to the bedroom—and there sat Caldwin at the foot of the bed, just as before.

"Ah, doctor; glad to see you," said he, turning. "The poor old boy is feeling worse."

I didn't take my eyes off Caldwin, but I could see Ward in the less distinct part of my visual field. He was feebly clawing under his pillow, and seemed not to know what he was about.

"What time is it?" he mumbled. "Dal, where's my watch?"

Their acquaintance had evidently ripened in these hours. Ward had not used that old and intimate name during my former visit.

With amiable patience Caldwin hunted for the watch, found it under the middle of Ward's back, and put it into his hands. He was hardly sane enough to read the record on the dial, but he did read it, aloud, after a dizzy struggle; and the watch was right. Then he looked up, and saw me.

"Oh!" he groaned. "You're here at last."

"What waked you up, old man?" said I, sitting down by the bed. He

stared at me confusedly; then looked from side to side, and suddenly scrambled to a sitting posture.

"Gentlemen," said he, "this has been a very long evening." He seemed to think that he had made a telling point, and to expect applause from a considerable company. This was delirium due to illness; there was nothing alcoholic about it. "I thank you," said he impressively, and subsided, closing his eyes. The tension of his body relaxed; he heaved a long sigh, then looked at me with comprehension.

"What did you say, doctor?" he asked, in a weak but rational way.

I repeated my question as to what had waked him.

"Pain," said he. "You'll find my alarm clock with an X ray, right here;" laying a hand over his stomach. "I slept just long enough for you to get away. It was nine-twenty-five when I waked up. Dal said you hadn't been gone more than ten or fifteen minutes."

"Did you go to sleep again?"

"Sleep! My holy giblets, I should think not. And you said you'd come back at eleven."

"Caldwin told you what was delaying me, of course?"

"Hum," he muttered. "Dal, what was that? Oh, yes; the girl. She took poison or something." A groan. "I hope she didn't suffer. Will she get well?"

"She is dead," said I, keeping Caldwin's face in view.

"Oh, too bad," said Caldwin. "What had she taken?"

"Exine."

He paused just as long as it would take a chemist to remember that there is such a substance.

"What?" he said. "Most extraordinary! Where in the world did she get it?"

"A hard question. That reminds me —you're a chemist, aren't you?"

"By trade," said he, smiling. "Had you forgotten?"

"Was the girl anybody in particular?" Ward asked. "Any social position—whatever that is, in New York?"

"We haven't the least idea who she is," I said, afraid to answer otherwise lest I should force Caldwin to admit that he knew her, and to take some immediate action which would separate us. Ward's case would not detain me long, but certain things must be done before I could leave him. Moreover, I was determined to get his story.

I got it, a bit at a time, without too obvious cross-questioning, and it staggered me. "I'd have died without Dal —he was right here every minute. Was I batty? About as I am now." And so forth, his chief memories being of his pain, the awful dragging of the time, and the unremitting attentions of Caldwin.

Because of his condition, I could not be sure how much he really remembered and how much had been put into his head. It would have been easy for Caldwin to trick him; set his watch backward and forward; and impress certain beliefs upon his wandering mind by patient repetition.

My theory was that Caldwin had had an appointment, sufficiently secret, with Miss Anna K. at the Star Theater, and that something in their conflicting interests had led him to plan her death. He had in his pocket a poison with which he meant to kill her. As to when or where or how it should be done, he may have been in doubt. When I put Ward to sleep, Caldwin saw his chance. He left the hotel as cautiously as possible, did his damnable work at the theater, and returned to find Ward still asleep, with his watch under his pillow.

Caldwin set the watch back to nine-twenty-five; waked Ward; filled his mind with the idea of time, and subsequently deceived him as to the lapse of it—a perfectly easy thing to do with a man to whom a minute seemed like an hour. After being waked, Ward was probably in a condition full of momentary eclipses of consciousness which he himself did not perceive. In such a state the mind is open to deception similar to that which may be practiced upon a hypnotized subject. Anything is believed, if it is skillfully presented.

When the telephone message came, Caldwin carefully explained it to Ward, and adjusted all conceptions of time in his mind to suit the story which it was desired that he should remember. The watch, set forward to the right hour, was put into his hand, and he was persuaded to note exactly when Caldwin left the room with my bag, and when he returned.

That was my theory, but I got nothing out of Ward to support it. He was partially irrational, but the main points of the story were fastened into his mind with barbs. The testimony, as he gave it, was far from convincing, but I had sense enough to foresee that it would not always sound the same.

Billy Ward, a whimpering invalid, delirious with pain and fever, was not an impressive witness. But William L. Ward, restored to health and to the aspect that he wears as a millionaire of State Street, cool as a fish, experienced on the stand, and deeply devoted to the defense, would be another pair of shoes entirely. If he should give Caldwin an alibi in court, it would stick.

I could imagine myself, the despised and distrusted medical expert, trying to tell a jury that Mr. Ward was *non compos mentis* on the occasion in question, and did not now know what he was talking about. And, in fact, no medical opinion would be worth much on that point. Delirium in such acute illnesses comes and goes, and unless a doctor is present all the time he cannot know whether the patient had a lucid interval or was crazy as a loon.

What I should have done was to call Lieutenant Redfield to the Hotel Astor immediately, and let him question Ward, and see his condition. Scandals lead us to distrust the police, but as a matter of sober fact the lieutenant was at least as honest a man as myself, and vastly more competent. An inward voice told me what I ought to do, but I was a greenhorn in these matters and could not command the necessary resolution.

Part of the time while Ward was answering me his eyes roamed uneasily toward a dark corner of the room, where he may have seen a blue zebra with green stripes, playing the harp. I should have given the police the full benefit of this, but I didn't. Such follies doubtless contribute often to the failure of criminal investigations by the men who wear the city's uniform, not without distinction, and are employed at insufficient wages to do this highly important work.

Meanwhile, Caldwin had sat in his usual place, smoking a cigarette—to the great detriment of the air in the sick room. Not more than two or three times did he help Ward with any reminders, and always with perfect simplicity: it was just what any listener who knew the facts would be certain to do. If the man were innocent, there was no reason why he should suspect the object of my inquiries.

At the expiration of about twenty minutes Ward's pain ceased, and he sank instantly to sleep. I gave him into the charge of the nurse, and Caldwin and I went into the sitting room. The time had come for a more open procedure, and I shuddered at my own incapacity. Doubts assailed me. It was possible that instead of striking at this man's conscience, if he had one, I was now about to pierce him through the heart. For all that I really knew, he might have worshiped that woman as she deserved, and have been as ready as any man since love first came into the world to shield her with his life from the least menace of injury.

"You must be awfully tired," said Caldwin, sympathetically. "Up at eight this morning, I'll bet; and you've done a seventeen-hour stretch."

He dropped the stub of his cigarette into an ash tray, and it bounced out, and lay smoldering on a table scarf. I put it where it belonged—if there is any such place for a cigarette.

"Thanks," said Caldwin. "I was thinking—why don't you come home with me to-night, and sleep in peace where the patients can't bother you with the telephone?"

"You're very kind," said I, "but it's late——"

"Guest room always ready; no bother at all. We have quite a big house, and only three in the family, my two cousins and myself. Not really cousins; step-children of my late uncle—Anna and Marian Kingsley. I want you to meet them, after which I shall invite your congratulations. Anna and I are to be married; very soon, I hope."

It seemed horrible to let him go on speaking in this way. If he were innocent, he should receive the truth. If guilty, he was destitute of human feeling, the mere shell of a man, inhabited by a demon. I leaned heavily on the table and stared across at him.

"Come, old man," said he, taking my bag. "You're all in. You must go to bed."

"Caldwin," said I, "there's a coincidence in this affair of to-night; only that, I hope, but it breaks my nerve a little. You spoke just now of your fiancée, Miss Anna Kingsley. Her first name and the initial of the last are the same as those of that young woman."

As a person of good manners he looked at me, not pointedly, to see why, without need, I had said a thing so unpleasant. Grave apprehension dawned in his face.

"No," he said softly. "It's impossible. She wouldn't have been alone."

"There was a ring, inscribed 'Clement to Anna,' with a date, June of last year."

"Her appearance——?"

I began to describe her, but stopped, seeing that he had ceased to listen. He had the look of one impelled by dreadful need of haste, and unable to move. I led him toward the door.

"You must see her," said I. "There is still a chance of error."

"What shall I do?" he said brokenly. "There's Marian—I don't dare telephone to the house. She'll be alone. She may be frightened already."

"If it seems best, we will telephone from the hospital," said I.

"You will come with me?" He put a hand on my shoulder, and clung to me, convulsed. I could hear his teeth rattle together. Slowly he straightened up and began to walk like a man just out of bed after a long illness.

"There must be a right way to bear this; strength to go on. And there's Marian," he seemed to clutch at this thought. "Surely there's something I can do to help her."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SOURCE OF THE PLAY.

The ride to the hospital occupied but three or four minutes, and Caldwin said little that was material. Neither by word nor act did he betray guilt. He said that he had last seen Miss Kingsley about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, when he was finishing a late breakfast. She was going out for some shopping, he understood; she had asked about the car which was at the door—whether he would wish to use it that afternoon. He had said no. There had been nothing unusual in her manner. She mentioned no engagements for the evening; there was nothing on, so far as he knew.

He had worked in the laboratory till mid-afternoon; then, feeling not very fit, he had gone out into the open air. He walked downtown with no particular destination, and drifted into the Astor where he heard of Ward's illness. Seeing how serious that was, he had telephoned home that he would dine out. A servant took the message. Caldwin did not know whether Miss Kingsley was in at the time.

When I asked him as to any person who had enmity against Miss Kingsley, or might profit by her death, he answered: "Nobody could have desired her death. I can't understand it. Forgive me if I say no more, dear old boy. I must have time to think."

I could not quarrel with his reticence, but it seemed to me that if he had any suspicion he showed an unmanly lack of resentment, yet I could not fairly count this against him. It might be due to mental shock, or merely to the difference between his nature and my own. In the depths of his mind he might now be sharpening the knife, in his own racial way, to be the instrument of justice.

It was probable that Miss Kingsley had been removed to another place in the hospital, but failing at the moment of our entrance to see any one who could direct me, I led Caldwin to the same room. As I opened the door I was aware of persons within. Directly in front of me Miss Kingsley lay with face uncovered, under a strong light, and at the far side of the bed some one was kneeling. The figure rose, and it was as if the soul of the dead woman, rejuvenated for heaven, had risen from the body.

This must be the sister; it was her portrait not Anna's which I had seen in the locket; but these inferences did not come quickly enough to prevent me from being considerably startled. For an interval the girl and I were face to face, equally still; and then she saw Caldwin who found space to pass me.

She said: "Cousin Clement," nothing more, and the utterance was purely automatic, a mere vocal response to an impression made upon the eye—as if some one had held an apple before her face, and she had named it. And the lack of expression in a voice so sweet and young was horrible to hear. Everything in the room, living and inanimate, seemed to answer with a thrill of pain.

A man spoke from behind me, saying, "Her sister," and I turned to see Lieutenant Redfield standing against the wall.

"Madame Jeune knew the dead girl by description," he continued. "A customer of hers; the name's Kingsley. This is Mr. Caldwin, I suppose, the man who was engaged to her. Where'd you find him?"

I answered in the briefest possible manner, my attention being centered on the meeting between Caldwin and the girl. It was perfectly natural to the eye, surely covering no secrets on her part, and revealing only the affection and confidence proper to the relation in which they had lived since her early childhood—members of one family, yet not united by blood. Neither was demonstrative, or suffered loss of dignity through that self-indulgence common in affliction. The girl clung to him in spirit as the sole sharer of her grief, the only person whom it was possible to address at such a moment and be understood.

It was easy to see, however, that the sudden, desolating shock had induced a supernormal state of Marian's nerves, but instead of breaking, she revealed a strength and unity of feeling which made the other living persons in the room appear like stuffed figures posed in accidental attitudes, even Caldwin who, as I now remember, did not visibly fail in sincerity and gentleness.

Marian had come to the hospital unaccompanied, believing what she had been told by telephone—that her sister had been stricken with illness. She now knew only that death had resulted from poison in candy, and she supposed it to have been accidental. She asked Caldwin, in effect, how it could have happened, but obviously with no expectation that he could tell her, or the least thought of anything hidden, known to him and not to her. He attempted no explanation; merely tried to comfort her, and to prepare her for the few questions which she might be called upon to answer.

The lieutenant heard this, and stepped forward. His manner was admirably considerate both then and afterward. He addressed Caldwin, saying:

"If you'll ask the young lady what her sister said to her this evening, before leaving the house, I won't trouble her further. Perhaps you'll give me a few minutes in another room. It won't be long, and the nurse will be here."

But Marian did not wait for Caldwin to put the desired question; she answered it at once. Her sister had said merely that she was going out and would be home about eleven. Marian had supposed that she was going to the house of some acquaintance in the neighborhood. She was waiting for her sister without anxiety, and had fallen asleep on a couch, when the telephone had waked her. On receiving the message she had left the house at once, not calling any of the servants.

The lieutenant thanked her, and made

a sign to Caldwin, which the girl saw. She would not permit him to leave the room. She drew a chair close to the bed, sat down, and took her sister's hand. The nurse would have covered the face of the dead, but Marian restrained her.

"Cousin Clement, I wish you to sit here," she said, indicating a place beside her. "You will tell them whatever they wish to know, and perhaps I can help you."

Caldwin glanced at the lieutenant who silently referred the matter to me. I nodded. To overrule the girl in her present state would do more harm than any conceivable inquisition. Caldwin placed a chair beside her and sat down. He had the discretion not to touch her nor to offer any sympathy in words.

The lieutenant put the questions to Caldwin, and as I had anticipated, it was Marian who replied. The questions suggested the answers, and she responded automatically. When the suggestion was not immediately effective upon her mind, she remained silent with the simplicity of a saint.

The bright lamp had been extinguished and the two beautiful faces, the living and the dead, were softly illumined. The resemblance which had startled me into seeing one of them as the ghost of the other no longer impressed me. It was only what should be usual in families, an index of pure blood and proper mating. These two girls were individually distinct, but the recognition of that fact required a finer discrimination than we commonly employ. There are a few trained persons who appreciate the beauty and distinction of a thoroughbred.

These notions flashed out in my mind, and were gathered again into that pigeonhole where I keep them. If an angel had whispered to me from what source I was soon to receive support for them, I should have been extremely surprised, not to say incredulous.

The lieutenant was bringing out matters which I already knew; that Anna and Marian were stepdaughters of Dallas Caldwin, who had died about a year ago; that their mother had long been dead; that Mr. Caldwin had been a druggist and chemist; that Cousin Clement now conducted the business; and that the family had lived for about two years in the house on Eighty-fifth Street. The elder sister and Clement Caldwin had been engaged since a year ago last spring. There had been no quarrel. The long postponement of the marriage had been due to the shock sustained by Miss Kingsley at the time of Mr. Dallas Caldwin's death. She had never fully recovered from it.

"What were the circumstances?" the lieutenant asked.

"It was very sudden," Marian answered. "My sister was with him in his sitting room upstairs, in the evening; and without pain, without the least warning, he died. He was speaking in his usual manner almost at the very moment."

"What followed?"

"My sister caught him in her arms as he fell forward from his chair. She cried out, of course, and Cousin Clement ran into the room. He called Doctor Robertson, papa's regular physician, who had been with him only a few minutes before, and he came quickly, but nothing could be done. He said papa had died instantly."

"From what cause?"

"A weakness of the heart. Doctor Robertson thought he had injured himself by smoking too much; he had almost made him stop, and Mr. Caldwin had improved till the last day or two, when he had been not quite so well."

Redfield paused, and gave me a sidelong look equal to many words. Beyond doubt, we had arrived at the source of Archibald Grew's play.

"And the autopsy showed that death was due to heart disease?" said the lieutenant; but this touched no spring in the girl's mind, and she remained perfectly placid.

"No autopsy was held," said Caldwin. "None was required. Doctor Robertson understood the case thoroughly, and had long foreseen the end."

"Was there any unpleasant curiosity? Inquiries by reporters and others?"

Again it was Caldwin who replied.

"The papers printed only brief obituary notices. There was no attempt to make a mystery of my uncle's death, if that's what you mean."

"Was he well off?" the lieutenant asked.

"Yes," said Marian. "He had recovered all his money and a great deal more."

"Who inherited his property?"

"We did. We three."

"Mr. Caldwin, you succeeded to the business, I believe," said the lieutenant, "the store and laboratory."

"As manager," Caldwin answered. "I have a small interest, but the virtual ownership passed to Miss Anna Kingsley under my uncle's will."

"What is that property worth?"

"You touch on a peculiar point there," Caldwin said. "The business was worth little at the time the will was drawn; but my uncle had for some time been experimenting with the synthetic drugs for which this country had depended upon Germany. Shortly after the outbreak of the European war he attained some important results. You may be aware of the enormous advance in the prices of those medicines. As a consequence my uncle's processes and contracts, at the time of his death, were of great value, certainly worth more than a million dollars."

"Who are the heirs of Miss Anna Kingsley?"

"Cousin Clement and I, sharing equally." The girl said it merely because she knew it. The statement had no context in her mind. Uttered with such complete detachment, it had the startling effect of some sudden, unconscious revelation by a child. My eyes hastily focused Caldwin's face and saw him quietly attentive as before, partly to the questioner, partly to Marian as the object of his affectionate care. He nodded in confirmation, and murmured:

"There is a will, I believe."

The lieutenant was equally steady. He was moving ahead like a slow engine on the rails. He seemed to know where he was going, but I had no idea.

CHAPTER IX.

REDFIELD'S THEORY.

"I suppose Mr. Caldwin's estate has not been settled," said the lieutenant.

"Not fully," Caldwin replied; "and there may be complications, as Miss Kingsley was executrix, and had the whole affair in her hands."

"All in her hands," said the lieutenant. "I see. Do you know a man named Gregory S. Archer?"

"Archer," Marian echoed the name. "I don't know him, but I've heard of him from my sister. I think she met him in the office of a magazine. It was something about a story of hers—that is my impression. She mentioned him to me only once. I think he wished to make her acquaintance socially. She said, 'If he ever asks for me, I wish him to be told that I have gone to France.' He never appeared."

"Your sister wrote stories?"

"Yes; ever since she was a girl. But she destroyed most of them. A few were published, and she got many letters from editors. I think she cared little for the literary part. Everything was experiment with her—trying to find what is in a thing, and the method of making it. When she found out, she turned to something else."

"Did she experiment with scenarios?"

"I don't know. She rarely spoke of her writings."

"How long ago did she tell you about Archer?"

"Several months. Why do you ask these questions?"

"We think your sister may have met him at the theater this evening. Could she have had an appointment with him?"

"Certainly not. She wished to avoid him."

"Did she seem afraid of him?"

The question disturbed her mind, which in the last few minutes had shown signs of the revival of normal attention.

"What has this to do with my sister's death?" she said. "I was told that she was poisoned with candy. Did any one give it to her? Cousin Clement,

do you believe any one could have meant to harm her?"

The lieutenant gave me a chance to interfere, if I were anxious as to the girl's condition. I signed to him to proceed. It would have been cruel and unwise to give her an impression of evasion or concealment.

"We learn that Miss Kingsley bought the candy at a store near the theater," he said. "There is no reason to suspect that anything was wrong with it at that time. Still, there's a chance of accident. The poison was separate, and we don't know whether she herself had it or some one else."

"Why should she have had it? What was it?"

"It's called exine."

Evidently the name meant nothing to Marian. She looked to Caldwin.

"Anna couldn't have had it," he said. "It's a very rare substance. There's none of it in our store, or any other so far as I'm aware. It isn't sold."

"Would she have known what it is?" Redfield asked.

"Probably," said Caldwin. "She had studied pharmacy; in fact, she was a chemist. She had assisted my uncle in the store and in the laboratory up to about a year before his death. In those days Mr. Caldwin was in hard straits, always on the brink of failure. We all worked, I can tell you."

Marian had been looking steadily into the lieutenant's face.

"I wish you to tell me what you believe," she said.

He attempted to put her off, saying that he had no fixed opinion. The case was very puzzling.

"Pardon me; you have made up your mind," she said. "You have had a definite object in your questions, and all our answers have satisfied you; they have confirmed your belief. Certainly I have a right to know what it is. This is my sister. I am speaking for her. What have you to say to us?"

Redfield was visibly affected, but there was no very obvious tempering of the wind to the shorn lamb in his procedure.

"I believe that your sister has been harassed by a man, or men, who were after her money," said he, after reflection. "They pretended to have evidence that Mr. Dallas Caldwin's death was not due to heart disease, but to poison put into his cigars—this exine that I've mentioned. In order to frighten her they got up a screen play telling the story of this alleged crime, and the Kam company produced it, innocently, so far as the Kams themselves are concerned.

"Your sister went to see that play to-night, on coercion, and one of the blackmailers talked with her, doubtless demanding a large sum of money under threats. As a feature of the alleged evidence of the murder of Mr. Caldwin, the blackmailer had some of that poison; and either by accident or design—the motive, in the latter alternative being undiscovered as yet—that poison caused this cruel loss and grief which words can't help nor measure."

The state of Marian's mind rendered her incapable of the natural surprise and bewilderment. She caught a single idea, and responded to it instantly and directly.

"There was nothing in Mr. Caldwin's death that could have been used to frighten my sister. If you knew her, you would understand. She would have told the nearest policeman, and that would have been the end of it. If there was anything left to be done, Cousin Clement would have done it. He would have heard the whole story just as soon as she could find him; and we should all have acted together, openly, without the least fear."

"But your sister didn't behave in that manner," Redfield rejoined gently. "That's a known fact, and we can't explain it away; we've got to account for it. She didn't see this play to-night by accident; somebody told her to go; yet she said nothing about it to you or Mr. Caldwin. She made a secret of it; covered it carefully. No, I learn that the Kam company is about four months ahead on the plays in this series, which means that this play was on their schedule for production at least four months ago. And it had

taken some time to write it. Moreover, the play certainly wasn't the first move of this gang; it's too elaborate; they tried other pressure, both before and after they got the play idea. And your sister made a secret of that, just as she did of going to the play to-night. She's been fighting these men, alone, all this time. You say she was brave; I'll be the last to contradict you."

"Cousin Clement, has Anna ever given you a hint of this?"

"No, dear," said he tenderly; "not the least in the world."

"I neglected to tell you," said the lieutenant, "that in the play the young lady doesn't figure as the guilty person. It's the rich man's nephew who's supposed to have killed him, and the young lady detects the crime. Of course, it's all covered under false names, and the love story is changed. But there's no doubt what it means. It would all be clear to the right party."

"This can't be true, Cousin Clement. Anna would have told you."

"Surely," said Caldwin, "unless there's some strange thing that we don't know. But we must be patient; we must help this officer all we can. He is trying to find out the truth for us, and he's had only a few hours."

"Who is Mr. Archer?" said Marian suddenly. "What had he to do with this?"

"He wrote the play," said the lieutenant. "As to how it came about, I figure it this way: Miss Kingsley, being interested in writing, started to experiment with scenarios. She went to the Kams to make inquiries. Archer is the man she'd have been likely to see. He's got a record; he's been connected with fakes and swindles for years, but has always managed to wriggle out, with good legal advice.

"He was interested in Miss Kingsley; no doubt dazzled by such an unusual visitor. He knew she was rich as soon as he looked at her. He showed his interest too plain, and that's why he got a wrong address. He was in the outer office when she made her inquiry, and invited her right in, which is why she didn't show a card. Whatever were the details of that first meeting, Archer traced her up; learned her family history, and this is the result.

"Of course he wasn't alone in this scheme. He may have been a minor figure, after it got started. We have reason to believe from something he was heard to say, that he isn't directly responsible for her death, and didn't know physical harm would be done. He thought she was only to be frightened by this play which would show the conspirators' knowledge, and power and boldness."

Marian had followed this statement with sufficient comprehension. She turned again to Caldwin.

"But, Cousin Clement, if these men were trying to make Anna pay them money, why did they—do this?"

"We don't know what Anna may have done," he replied; and then addressed the lieutenant: "If your conjecture is correct, and the full truth is ever discovered, you will be surprised, I think. Miss Kingsley was a very dangerous adversary; she had a peculiar mind, developed by training unusual for a woman. She possessed the endless patience of the born experimenter; and the scientific method was so ingrained in her that she couldn't go backward, she inevitably progressed in whatever she undertook. You may think that I exaggerate, that I am speaking in mere nervousness, out of the unbearable anguish that I feel; but I tell you, if she was really engaged in such a struggle as you describe, the time was bound to come when those men would be beaten, when they would *have* to kill her to escape the consequences of defeat. It is possible that that time came to-night."

Redfield nodded slowly, in qualified assent.

"Your theory explains one mighty hard puzzle," he said; "I mean the candy. She didn't buy it to eat—going on such a business as this. You would say that she had it to emphasize her contempt for these men and their threats. It may be so. But it's almost useless to discuss these points at this stage. Do you happen to know of her

having used any large sums of money of late?"

"Large sums have passed through her hands," Caldwin replied. "We have received heavy payments, in checks drawn to her order. She may have cashed some of them without turning them over to our accountants. This will be difficult to trace."

"Will you take this up with me tomorrow?" said the lieutenant, rising; and Caldwin signified his willingness. Redfield approached nearer to Marian, who lifted her eyes steadily as he advanced, regarding him with that peculiar singleness of attention which was a feature of her state.

"You have been very patient, brave and helpful," he said. "I want to thank you; and beg leave to ask one last question. Mr. Caldwin will pardon me."

Marian waited, utterly motionless.

"You feel perfectly sure of your sister's love for Mr. Caldwin. It existed; it was unbroken. I'll take the strength of it for granted, having made my judgment as to her nature, and yours."

"She loved him," said Marian. "She always loved him. I never understood why they weren't married long ago."

Whether Caldwin heard this I am uncertain. He had risen, and we were speaking together privately on the question whether the police would permit the removal of Miss Kingsley's body to her home. I promised to do what I could, and to this end I left the room, with the lieutenant, a moment later.

He told me that the body would probably be removed in the course of the night to an undertaker's, where an autopsy would be held at the expiration of the interval prescribed by law. Upon the criminal aspect of the case I didn't know what to say to him; my own convictions had been unsettled, and I preferred to listen rather than to speak. He would say little, pleading haste.

"You can tie to this," he said: "Not only did they accuse Caldwin to that young woman, but they brought a strong indictment. What was the last thing she did? She took off that ring. Will you show me more than one explanation?"

"You mean that they convinced her, and drove her to suicide."

"I can't see it any other way," said he. "I figure that her confidence in this man may not have been exactly ironclad, though she loved him. She was a woman of principle; anybody can see that. She was twenty-five years old, and she'd always known Caldwin. As the sister said, why weren't they married long ago? Perhaps she never was exactly satisfied as to his character. One thing is sure: the shock of her stepfather's death hasn't delayed the wedding all this while. I don't credit that view for an instant. No, sir; she's had something worse than that on her mind."

"Do you think the blackmailers had real evidence against Caldwin?"

"If they did," said he, "what'll it be worth? Under the circumstances, just about nothing."

CHAPTER X.

STARTING THE PRESS.

Our conversation was interrupted by the advent of several reporters to whose questions the lieutenant responded with bare facts. There was no need for him to state his theory; the reporters had evolved it without assistance. I learned that blackmail based on the death of a rich person was a recognized industry, like picking pockets on crowded cars.

Even for Miss Kingsley's fate several precedents were cited—suicides of men and women who had been hunted too hard by the extortioners. Some of these unfortunates had been guilty and others innocent; it was a matter not of conscience but of losing one's nerve under protracted torture. As a rule the guilty stood it better than the innocent, and the long fight made by Miss Kingsley—at least six months—was a point against her.

"It took only six weeks to settle Hannah Elizabeth Craig," said one of the reporters; and the citation of this well-known case provoked a laugh. Miss

Craig had been blackmailed by servants who threatened to expose the truth about the death of her father, a famous miser. Lightning had killed him, and everybody knew it. The charge was that Miss Craig, with malice aforethought, had induced him to sit by an open window of their country house during a heavy shower. After six weeks of persecution the nervous maiden lady went to New York and jumped from the roof of a fifteen-story hotel—by coincidence, one floor for every million dollars she had inherited from Mr. Craig.

"No; there's nothing new in blackmail," the journalist continued. "The feature in to-night's affair is the discovery of a new use for the screen. And this exine seems to be a good thing, too. Doctor, will you tell us about it, and that freak business of the test?"

I told them, and they were interested; and then they listened respectfully to my plea for fair treatment of the victim of this crime. A middle-aged, red-faced Irishman—he who had cited the case of Hannah Elizabeth Craig—was the accepted spokesman of the party. Almost every organ of his body was audibly crying out for rest in the grave, but his mind was as lively as a young fox terrier; and the way he exposed the weakness of my argument, in questions of not more than six words each, was the finest lesson in controversy that I have ever received. Of course I was at a disadvantage, being obliged to state only in general terms my belief that Miss Kingsley had been murdered, and not daring to hint at my suspicion against Caldwin; but this experience showed me that I had no case, no real theory that would stand examination, and that I must lock up my private opinions in my own head.

During the remainder of the night I did the little that I could for Marian Kingsley's comfort, and in the early morning I brought two of her woman friends to help her in the moment of separation from her sister, which must come soon.

I got a little sleep, made some necessary calls in the neighborhood, and found time for Billy Ward about four in the afternoon, having learned by telephone that he was much improved.

On the way downtown I read the afternoon reports, and found only what I knew or had anticipated. The case was being handled with care, naturally, for there was a libel suit in every angle of it. A prominent feature of all the later reports was a strong statement from Doctor Robertson that there could be no question as to the cause of Dallas Caldwin's death. How could any one prove the contrary, after such a lapse of time?

Archer was at liberty, and had not been charged with any offense. He had repeated in an interview his story as I had heard it. Of course it left half a dozen riddles to be answered, but what would happen if nobody ever answered them? They would be forgotten. Archer denied that he had known or attempted to discover anything about the private affairs of "Agnes Carey." He had thought she was poor, and anxious to make money with scenarios.

"It is nothing, in these days, to see a handsomely dressed girl who is starving to death," said he. "They go out of your office smiling, and then drop on the pavement. I would have tried to help her, but she told me she was going to France."

He had never heard of Dallas Caldwin, alive or dead. The play was a work of his imagination, slightly assisted by the facts of a criminal case in the West. He produced the clipping, from a portfolio in which for some years he had filed sensational reports which might be used as the basis of plots. The only wonder was that a person equipped with such a portfolio had not been able to find a case more closely analogous. My certainty that the play had been written to exhibit Dallas Caldwin's death as a crime remained unshaken.

The Kams had been quick to see the possibilities of gratuitous advertising. They were coöperating eagerly with the police and the reporters, for whose benefit a private view of Thriller No 11

was to be given in the Kam studios. The original scenario was now in the authorities' hands, through the courtesy of Mr. Theodore Kam. It had been written by Archer on the typewriter in his office, and all the corrections were in his hand.

The veracious Mr. Jacobson was reported as saying that Archer had discussed the play with him in its early stages, and that the development of the plot had been changed a dozen times. Exine had not figured in these discussions, because neither he nor Archer had ever heard of it. The test had been got from a book or magazine, one of a great many which had been consulted hastily, and long since forgotten.

What impressed me in all this was the fact that the one person in the case for whom no defense appeared, was the victim. In spite of all the complimentary rubbish and skillful avoidance of direct statement, Anna Kingsley was displayed before the world as a young woman who had inherited more than a million dollars from her stepfather, and had committed suicide during the exhibition of a picture play which represented his sudden death to have been a murder. True, the play accused some one else, but there were various ways of looking at that circumstance, as I was presently to be informed.

I found Ward's bedroom littered with newspapers. Ward, surprisingly restored and businesslike, was sitting up in bed, backed by pillows. The clipped accounts of last night's affair, neatly pinned together, lay on the counterpane with telegraph blanks and a stylographic pen.

"Bad affair," he said. "We'll take it up presently. Now as for me——" The next fifteen minutes were devoted exclusively to the welfare of Mr. Ward. He listened to the favorable prophecy with which I closed these proceedings; gave the nurse my prescription to be filled, and asked her to be so kind as to close the bedroom door when she went out.

Then a change came over the spirit of our relations. We were no more doctor and patient. You would have thought I was the head of a department of Ward's business, a valued employee entitled to considerate treatment, but now due for a decided "call-down."

"Lieutenant Redfield has just been here," he said. "Why did you tell him that I was out of my head last night?"

I could not remember that I had done so.

"Well, you did," said Ward, "and it was a bad break. Dal Caldwin is involved in a very dangerous scandal, and we've got to protect him, not make things worse. Don't you know that he answers the description of the man who went to that box last night?"

"Nobody else seems to have noticed it," said I, "but it's plain enough."

"Then why did you say anything to weaken the force of my evidence? You and I know where Dal was—right here in this room. And the police and newspapers have got to understand that that's an unassailable fact."

"Suppose it isn't," said I, "what would you infer?"

"If Dal got out of this room and went to the Star, it would mean that he was summoned, just as Miss Kingsley was. It would mean that both were objects of this blackmailing attack, and that's precisely what we want to guard against. Important business interests are at stake here. Caldwin is in negotiations with the government for big deals on these medicines. It'll run into millions. A scandal of this sort might be used to cut him out of the whole thing."

"What do you suggest?" said I, trying to keep cool.

"Press agency," he answered promptly. "That's the one thing that brings home the bacon, in these days. I've telegraphed to a good man, Joe McCullom, of our class. He's a food expert, and household economy sharp; he runs a lot of publicity on those subjects—antisocialist propaganda, you understand; he draws a big salary, on the quiet, from the right people. I've asked Joe to come and see me."

"The government will pay about as much attention to Caldwin's private af-

fairs as they will to the buttons on his undershirt," said I. "If his medicines will help any, you can bet that Washington will get them."

"Don't you fool yourself," he retorted. "In these excited times any club is good enough to knock a man down with. In Dal's case there are two chief points to be covered. Old Caldwin's death must be made to look natural, and we must show that Dal was never accused of killing him—never by anybody; knew nothing about this blackmailing."

"But the play accuses him——"

"What does that amount to?" Ward interrupted. "If the play was to be used for intimidation, the first thing necessary was to write it so that somebody would produce it. But the girl is the natural heroine; this is no vampire piece. No producer would stand for having the girl a murderess. The nephew had to be the villain; there's no other way to construct it.

"The effect on Miss Kingsley's nerves would be just as strong or even stronger," he continued. "Don't you see? These people get the play started here in New York, and then threaten to write anonymous letters to the police. If the investigation should be directed first against Dal, it would be all the worse for Miss Kingsley. Dal, being entirely innocent, might make fatal disclosures. They've probably experimented with exine in the Caldwin laboratory, and the girl has done the work—a year or two ago, perhaps, but 'twould have to be covered up. And in order to do that, she'd mighty near have to confess to Dal——"

"Confess *what?*" said I. "She hadn't anything to confess. If you'd seen her, you'd talk more like a man and less like a wolf."

"There's nothing heartless about *me*," said he decisively. "We'll protect this young lady's name in every possible manner. I'll make a point of that with McCullom. But there's the property interest which we mustn't forget. For business reasons it's absolutely essential to focus the story on Miss Kingsley. Understand, there'll be press agency on the other side. Dal has his competitors. And if they can show that he knew of this blackmail, and stood for it without notifying the police, there's no telling what it may cost him."

"Damnation!" said I, but got no further. The telephone in the sitting room had been ringing, and now the nurse came in to say that Mr. Caldwin was inquiring as to the state of Mr. Ward's health.

"That's like Dal, isn't it?" Ward said. "He wouldn't neglect a courtesy of this sort if he was being burned at the stake."

During this speech he had been getting a grip on the bedclothes, and he now rose, carrying them all with him, a medley of Roman togas. There was a telephone on a stand by the bed, but it had been broken last evening, and only the one in the other room was serviceable, Ward in his draperies sat down to it.

"How are you, Dal, poor old chap? Dreadful affliction. We're all heartbroken for you, all your old friends. I knew nothing about it till past noon. Bedridden, worse luck; and couldn't get in touch with you by phone. But I sent somebody. Oh, he's just left you, eh? Well, he's the best lawyer in New York. I retained him, you understand. Costs you nothing. But don't you neglect to take his advice. Well, we can't discuss it over the phone. The doctor's here, and we've been figuring out what we can do for you. Want to speak to him?"

Ward passed me the receiver, and I heard Caldwin's voice, stricken with weariness, but still preserving its amenity.

"I must thank you again for all you did last night. I'm at the house, virtually alone. Marian's in the care of her friends, and they're all shut up in her rooms. The police wouldn't let her stay with Anna—whom we shan't have at home till to-morrow. I'm terribly distressed of course, and ill besides. Didn't say so to Billy for fear of worrying him. Could you look in,

on your way uptown? I've just telephoned to your place."

I couldn't make the call as he requested, because of an appointment at my office which there was barely time for me to meet, but I promised to see Caldwin between six and seven at his house, and to help him through the sad business of dining in his desolated home. Ward then took the telephone, and encouraged Caldwin to disregard unpleasant gossip in the newspapers.

"By to-morrow morning we shall begin to get our own stuff in," he said. "I've wired for Joe McCullom;" and he went on to praise Joe as a man remarkable for delicacy no less than for "the punch" which would insure the printing of his news.

I couldn't hear Caldwin's replies, but I knew what they were—polite expressions of gratitude. Even assuming him to be devoid of guilt, and animated by the finest chivalry, I could not see him as a man capable of making a strong fight. I should expect a more energetic defense of Anna Kingsley from her young sister; but as a matter of cold fact the case for the family would pass into the hands of Ward and his agents; and I knew their plan of campaign.

Ward tried to ease my mind on this matter; he would protect Miss Kingsley with a smoke screen; make the blackmailing plot so complicated that the public would get tired of trying to understand it, and the newspapers would drop it. Many a good thing has been put through a legislature by that method, he assured me.

"And by the way, one of your immediate duties is to give an interview backing Doctor Robertson's denial that Dallas Caldwin was poisoned."

"What do I know about that?" said I.

"What do you care what you know? Make it read right," he retorted. "We're for Dal Caldwin, and we want to cover up this scandal in his family. Take it from me, if we don't rally to his support, he's likely to lose a million dollars' worth of business with the government, seventy per cent of it clear profit."

CHAPTER XI.

A CONTRIBUTION FROM MADAME JEUNE.

The patient for whose sake I had hurried home was not on hand when I arrived. A stranger was in my waiting room, a woman of middle age, exceedingly well dressed, and so nervous that she couldn't sit in a chair.

This was Madame Jeune, and she had come on an errand grimly ridiculous. The newspapers had given her my name, address, and occupation, and she had called with the absurd idea that she could make a sort of confession, and be shielded by the ægis of my professional vows. When I enlightened her as to the scope of my obligations of secrecy, she wavered for an instant on the brink of hysteria, and then made her confession just the same.

Her offense had to do with a letter, the last of three or four which had come to her house for "Agnes Carey." The others had passed to the person for whom they were intended, but this one had been dropped into a drawer and forgotten till last night. The period had been about three months, during which time Miss Kingsley had not favored the establishment with any orders for gowns.

Thinking herself bound in confidence to Miss Kingsley, Madame Jeune had refrained from mentioning this letter to the police, and had then gone into a panic about it. Counseled by fear, which is as often the mother as the child of danger, Madame Jeune had opened the letter, hoping that its contents would be trivial and that she could destroy it without remorse. Having read it, she couldn't decide whether it was important or not; she suspected that it was; and being inhabited by a genuine conscience, she had dared to do what was right, though aware that in her folly she had incurred the grave displeasure of the law.

I told her that I would give the letter to Mr. Caldwin, who would doubtless assume all responsibility, and say nothing injurious. Madame Jeune wept tears of relief, and showed her gratitude by telling me all she knew—which

was next to nothing. Miss Kingsley had asked her to receive these letters, if any should arrive, and had explained that she had given an editor a fictitious name because he seemed likely to be intrusive. A subsequent instruction had been that if Mr. Archer should call or telephone, Madame Jeune was to say that "Miss Carey" had gone abroad.

"He didn't come. I think he met Miss Kingsley somewhere, by accident, and she told him she was going away within a week. Was I right to say this to the police officer?"

I advised her to adhere to the truth, except as to the letter, and asked who the police officer was.

"The man who walks like a goose," said she; and no portrait of Redfield could have been more satisfactory. His gait was good enough when he really walked, but he had a queer, gooselike way of stepping short distances.

I had warned Madame Jeune at the outset not to tell me what was in the letter, and I carried it to Caldwin knowing no more than the envelope revealed —the insignia of the Kam Photo Play Company. This action was a severe strain on my sense of propriety. I suspected that Madame Jeune had not understood the letter, and if ever called upon to testify about it, would omit the most important parts. Moreover, I should dislike to betray a secret confided to me with tears by a woman who was exposing herself to danger on the compulsion of her own right principles. If Caldwin should suppress the letter, my suspicion against him would be strengthened, but my course of action would not be very clear.

Caldwin had told me that he was ill, and I had been prepared to find him suffering from nervous exhaustion. On the contrary his condition was so good that it could hardly be called normal under the circumstances. In these days we have methods of determining the severity of nervous shock, and though I did not subject Caldwin to any extensive tests, I am well convinced that his nerves were considerably steadier than mine. He said that he had suffered most from lack of friendly support, and that my coming had restored his fortitude.

He had spent a large part of the day looking through Miss Kingsley's papers, latterly with Lieutenant Redfield at one of his elbows and Ward's lawyer at the other. Nothing of the least value in the case had been found.

With that I took the letter from my pocket, told him how it had come into my possession, and put it into his hands.

"Thank you," said he. "Doubtless I'd better read it. Will you pardon me?"

He stepped to the window, and I saw him shake his head over the letter. I suspected that he was trying to devise a way of keeping the contents to himself, but presently he motioned me to approach.

"Did Madame Jeune impress you as sincere?" he asked. "Because I hardly think this letter is genuine. I'm afraid Archer has seen her, and has substituted this for a document of a different tenor. That would give him the advantage of an envelope postmarked with a proper date. How does it impress you?"

He gave me the letter which ran thus:

My Dear Miss Carey: Do call and see me before you go to France. I should like to make an arrangement with you whereby I might have a chance at anything suitable to the screen which you write while abroad. Your duties in France may be arduous, but there will be times of leisure, and perhaps you will get some excellent inspirations. I could send you funds for anything we accept, or bank the money for you here. And as I told you, we pay from five hundred to a thousand dollars—sometimes much more —for very good plots.

You must not be cast down by a single failure. I have always been afraid that I said something to discourage you, when I was obliged to return your first effort. I was really grieved when you destroyed it, there in my office. It showed that you were seriously disappointed. But I'm sure you have the right touch for pictures, and with a little practice will make a splendid success.

It is not necessary to be elaborate. What we want is the idea. I suggest that you put on paper, very briefly, some half dozen of your plots—not more than four or five hundred words for each. Then bring them in, and let me look them over. I'll give you a quick decision, and perhaps we may get a check through the mill for you before you

sail. Now do this, please, and it may prove to be the beginning of great things. Yours most sincerely, GREGORY S. ARCHER.

"You see the date," said Caldwin; "hardly three months ago. Archer's play was already written at that time, and probably in course of production. But this letter tends to prove that Archer didn't then know who 'Agnes Carey' was, and that he supposed her to be in need of money. Personally, I don't believe it."

I was inclined to think that Lieutenant Redfield would be equally skeptical; but on the other hand what could have induced Madame Jeune to permit the substitution? She would have committed crimes enough to send her to prison for fifty years. I presented that view of the matter to Caldwin.

"Quite right," said he. "We must be very careful. If we produce this letter, its genuineness will be questioned by the police if not by us; and that will be mighty bad for Madame Jeune, possibly a great injustice. The police will say that if she did such a thing, she must have been in the plot from the beginning."

"Decidedly," said I. "You can hardly imagine anybody's entering it at this stage, not even a very silly woman."

"No," said he, taking the letter from my hand. "I think we'd better keep this under cover for the present."

He told me that the other letters from Archer had not been found nor anything evidential as to his dealings with Miss Kingsley.

"Anna was a singularly ruthless person in the matter of destroying things no longer useful," Caldwin said. "The scientific mind, I suppose. And she had a business training besides. The business papers are in excellent order, but in the case of such a person it may be the more difficult to trace a payment secretly made. We have come upon no clew as yet."

I asked about her writings, and Caldwin told me that she had left very little. He had found no completed stories except those that had been printed. There were perhaps twenty skeletons of plots, and many detached scenes in which she had worked out problems of literary presentation in various experimental ways. A love plot, briefly sketched, was probably the thing which, in developed form, she had offered to the Kams. Caldwin, with Redfield's help, had looked through these papers, but had gained no light on any point of the mystery.

A kind of lukewarm sweetness in his manner sickened me, and yet I wished to hear more, not from curiosity or the hope of serviceable disclosures, but from a peculiar sympathy with this young woman whom I had seen for only a moment as she passed beyond the impenetrable veil. I wished to hear some one speak of her; I was aware of an eagerness of the memory to store up small pictures of her life.

CHAPTER XII.

A HIDDEN PAGE OF FAMILY HISTORY.

The house had been very still, but now we heard a person descending the stairs, slowly and heavily.

"Doctor Robertson," said Caldwin. "He's been up to see Marian."

It appeared, therefore, that I had permitted Caldwin to consult me while the family physician was actually in the house. My professional kit on the table looked quite large as Robertson drew nearer to the door.

He came ponderously into the room, a splendid old fellow with the front of Jove himself.

"Well! There's plenty of *you* to make a doctor of," he said, when Caldwin had gone through a form of introduction. "I don't care much for these little doctors—saving Holmes, of blessed memory, and a few others," he added with a twinkle in his eye; and gave me his strong, white hand. "I've just been hearing about you from my patient in very flattering terms."

The honor seemed incredible till he let me know that Doctor Linden had repeated to Marian what I had said to him in her sister's defense—decidedly a decent thing for Linden to have done.

"She means to appear at dinner, I believe, on your account," Robertson

continued. "Oh, certainly; she'd much better remain where she is. But she won't."

Caldwin had now left us, a servant having brought him a card; and Robertson took the opportunity to question me about exine. By the power of the press I had become the exine authority, a melancholy joke in view of my severely limited information. However, I had stolen a few minutes in the course of the afternoon, to read up; and so had Robertson, but I had been lucky enough to find something by a man who knew what he was writing about, and Robertson hadn't.

His questions showed that doubts had been awakened in his mind relative to the death of Dallas Caldwin; and he used no tricks to confuse my inferences on that point.

"I rely on your discretion and good will," said he. "I want to fortify myself with every known indication of exine poisoning, in order to be able to deny that a single one of them was present in the case of my friend Dallas. As a matter of fact, I didn't see any. If poison was used, the dosage was exceedingly small, merely sufficient to aggravate an existing condition. Nobody knows or ever can determine whether the final effective cause of death was a drugged cigar, or a sudden excitement, or an undigested morsel of the man's dinner. Confession wouldn't settle it, legally. The case will never be tried, except in the newspapers. I think we both know who will be the defendant."

"Anna Kingsley, beyond a doubt," said I.

"Then take the word of an old man who has known her from infancy, that the accusation is false and monstrous."

I said that his word would be very influential with me, but that I was already convinced.

"Still, I'm glad that a man of your standing can testify to the harmonious life of this family," said I, "and to Miss Kingsley's affection and loyalty in the days of her stepfather's trouble."

The fine old man drew back, almost as if offended.

"What's this? Are you trying to play censor to the truth? I hope you and I are above that nonsense," he said. "It's a custom of the hour, more honored in the breach than the observance."

I hadn't the least idea what he was talking about; and he saw it.

"Don't know what Dallas Caldwin's trouble was, eh?" he resumed. "I hope you won't read it in to-morrow's papers. Here are the facts: Dallas was trustee of the girls' money, quite a comfortable sum, inherited from a grandmother. And Dallas gambled it all away, along with his own. So he was due to go to jail, if anybody cared to send him. Instead, it was hushed up.

"That was five years ago. Anna had come out of college, and had gone into the laboratory to continue her chemical studies under Caldwin, with Cousin Clement as special instructor. Poor Clem needed something to sweeten his life, upon my word, though he got along better with his uncle than anybody else ever did. The boy made it as easy for Anna as he could, but she got more chemistry than she was looking for. I've seen Anna filling prescriptions in the store, late at night after a long day in the laboratory; and going without her wages in order to stave off a bankruptcy. I've given her the dress to cover her, because she hadn't time to sew."

"Why in Heaven's name did she endure it?"

"Not from affection and loyalty, I'm sorry to say. How fond she was of her stepfather you may judge from the fact that she wouldn't call her cousin by the name he'd always used—Dal, the same as his uncle. Anna changed the style to Clement. The reason why she stuck to the laboratory was her faith in the work that was being done; she took a gambling chance on Caldwin's experiments, believing that some way, some time, she would get back the money that belonged to her little sister. I doubt that she had any hope of ever seeing her own. For three years she led the life of a slave, but she did some splendid work, and very materially

helped Dallas Caldwin to the discoveries that made him rich."

"Did he behave decently about it?"

"Only with promises," Robertson replied. "Of course there's some excuse for that, because the most of his own profits weren't yet coined into money at the time of his death. He restored the trust fund, but even that was largely a matter of bookkeeping; he'd hung on to the trusteeship. Anna might easily have had him removed, but that would have meant an exposure. So all the money remained in his control.

"And it's my very decided opinion that if he'd lived two years longer, he'd have found a way to ruin himself and all the rest of the family. You couldn't keep Dallas Caldwin out of Wall Street by chaining him to the foundation stones, down there in the cellar. He'd have got to a broker's office, and dragged the whole house after him; and the house, and his new million, and the girls' money, and probably most of Clement's, would have melted like a little piece of ice dropped into the lake of fire and brimstone."

"She should have broken the trust," said I. "Surely she'd have done it, at the first sign of danger."

"If Anna had taken that action, Caldwin would have changed his will," Robertson responded; "and the girls would have lost the chance to inherit his fortune. Between you and me, I told Anna that the will was an asset to be highly considered. She was the least mercenary of women, but by talking about Marian's interests I could always keep her in line. And now, young man," he concluded, "I've laid the unfortunate truth before you. My belief in Anna's innocence is as firm as any part of my own personal recollection and knowledge. But what shall we do when this story is given to the public?"

"It seems almost hopeless to do anything while Miss Kingsley's death wears the appearance of suicide," said I. "If we can prove that she was murdered, her defense will be comparatively easy. There is the problem."

Robertson wagged his massive head.

"We must remember that there is more in this case than an injustice to the dead," said he. "If an avalanche of falsehood is heaped like a pyramid on Anna's grave, I shall look for serious results to Marian. I know these girls, and the peculiar strength of the affection between them. Marian's condition already justifies anxiety. It was agony for her to leave Anna lying there, today, but it had to be. Marian has been in perfect health, but you perceive her type. Nature is an unnatural mother to these golden-haired children. She destroys them individually; she blights or corrupts their offspring, being bent upon their total extinction. It takes nine doctors, ninety-nine policemen, and all the ministers and marrying magistrates in the world, to carry one pure-blooded blond into the third generation."

As the last leaf on a blond family tree, sturdy and fruitful a hundred years ago, I might have added my word to Robertson's, but we were interrupted by the sound of a car stopping at the door. We went to the window and saw a distinguished-looking couple and their daughter.

"Harry Sturgis," said Robertson. "He's Anna's lawyer. Started on a long tour Tuesday morning—that's yesterday. Evidently heard of this, and turned back."

Robertson met them in the hall, and brought them into the living room. Of all that was said in the next few minutes, one thing was of paramount importance. Miss Sturgis was the speaker:

"I'm sure I was with Anna when she first heard of that play. I had come over here just before dinner, Monday, to say good-by to her; we were in her room, and the telephone rang. It's in her bedroom, and I remained in her sitting room, of course, so I heard nothing of what was said; and Anna didn't tell me. But she was plainly surprised and greatly disturbed. All she said to me was, 'I must go out for a little while this evening; not a very pleasant errand.' Do you know whether she really went out?"

This was addressed to Robertson who knew nothing about it. Mr. Sturgis said to his daughter: "See if you can learn; and also ask the maid that switched the telephone call to Anna's room if she knows who called up."

Mrs. Sturgis accompanied her daughter on this inquiry. Sturgis turned to Robertson, and asked whether Anna's will had been found.

"It has not," was the reply. "We suspect that she destroyed it."

"Then Marian is the only heir," said I.

"Yes; so it would seem," said Sturgis.

"Has *she* any will?"

"For certain reasons connected with the administration of the Caldwin estate, each of the young people drew a will in favor of the other two," the lawyer replied.

So there was now but one life between Clement Caldwin and the millions which his uncle had not lived to gamble away. I was moved to hope that Marian would not fall into a state of health such that "an aggravation of an existing condition," as Robertson had phrased it, might result in her death. We had probably seen the last of exine, but the resources of physiological chemistry are vast.

Mrs. Sturgis and her daughter presently brought us the information that Anna had gone out directly after dinner on Monday—a few minutes past seven; and had come home shortly after nine. This indicated that she had gone to the Star Theater, and had seen the early exhibition of Archibald Grew's play.

The person who telephoned to Anna had given no name, but the maid had recognized the voice as that of Madame Jeune.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW CALDWIN ENTERTAINED A GUEST.

Caldwin, returning, heard the latest development of the mystery, and seemed to be astonished. He added nothing to our knowledge. Monday was the day of the banquet, and he had not seen Anna after six o'clock, when he had said good-by to her on leaving the house. Neither then nor afterward did she mention to him, he said, either Madame Jeune's communication or the play.

"Why should they have made her see it twice?" he said.

"I suspect that the appointment was for Tuesday evening," Sturgis suggested, "and that Anna went of her own will on Monday, to prepare her mind."

I expected Caldwin to introduce the letter which I had received from Madame Jeune, but he did not mention it. Instead, he told us of his visitor who had just departed. This was Napoleon Kam, head of the company, above Theodore, above Harris C., above all other Kams. He was escorted by one of Redfield's men, and their mission was to offer Caldwin a strictly private view of the screen play now so sadly memorable.

It was to be shown in the studio at half past eight this evening for the benefit of reporters and police. As there might be requests for the repeating of some portions, the time of representation would probably exceed an hour. Either before or afterward, as Caldwin should elect, the pictures would be exhibited to him and any friends whose presence he might desire.

"I doubt there's any use in my seeing it," Caldwin said; "but Redfield sent word that he wished me to, in order to pick out a possible clew which only a member of the family would notice. I agreed to go down there at half past nine."

Robertson wished to accompany him, and asked me if I would remain in the house, in case Marian should require any attention. Whereupon Caldwin announced that he had planned to keep me till morning.

"You shall have a good sleep," he said to me. "If I know you're here it will steady me wonderfully; and I shan't have to disturb you at all."

Thus it was arranged; and Robertson went home, to come again at nine.

Presently Marian appeared, attended by the Sturgises, and the other friend

who had been with her. The girl was sadly and incredibly changed since last night. Her body seemed to have no weight; she moved like a phantom. She seemed perfectly under control except for her voice in which there would appear tones beautiful and strange; and it would sometimes die in the air with the quiver of a bird song. She justified my thoughts of her by showing not the slightest sign of cheerfulness or resignation; nothing but courage and truth. She was wholly sincere in the face of life and death.

There was no reason to apprehend permanent injury from grief alone. She possessed abundant natural vigor, yet she was precisely the sort of person to be destroyed in a losing fight for abstract justice. It would not be the popular verdict against her sister that would kill her, but the vain attempt to defeat the gods who had created the situation.

I was surprised at her acuteness in perceiving that the real attack would not be against Cousin Clement. If she had believed him to be in danger she would have drawn closer to him, but the small distance by which she stood apart remained undiminished.

She sat down to dinner with us, and it was not till after Robertson had come and taken Caldwin away that she consented to retire. I wouldn't call her willful in the ordinary sense, but she certainly possessed a distinguished gift of natural authority. Nobody would send her to the rear in the hard battle which would begin to-morrow.

Shortly after ten, Marian's friend summoned me in alarm, but I found nothing to justify it. Marian had suffered her first violent paroxysm of weeping, which had ended suddenly in profound slumber. The friend had never seen the bodily mechanism react in this manner for its own protection; and had taken fright at her failure to arouse the girl. I congratulated her on this failure, and left Marian to her repose.

When I came out of her room I went to the guest chamber which had been assigned to me, and met Caldwin on the threshold. He had just come home. His glance dropped instantly to the bag which I carried.

"Is Marian ill?" he asked; and I told him how all was well with his little cousin for a time.

"Asleep," said he. "Three are asleep of this family as it was a year ago, and I alone am awake. Ah, well; they say a man should never be sorry for himself." And I couldn't have said truthfully that Caldwin seemed as sorry as he ought to be. "Shall we go into your room, and talk a little while before we rest? I have a few things to tell you, and I thought you were up here."

We went in, and first he glanced about, like a careful housekeeper, to assure himself that the room was in order and lacked nothing necessary to my comfort. Then he lighted one of his poisonous cigarettes.

"It begins to look bad for Madame Jeune," he said. "Poor foolish woman; I never dreamed that there was any harm in her."

"What does Redfield think? He was at the studio, of course."

"Oh, yes; but I don't know what his real opinion is, about Madame Jeune. I told him of the telephone message to Anna, but he knew of it already. He'd looked up all the recent calls to and from this house. Madame Jeune admits telling Anna of the play, and says that she happened to see it, Sunday evening—they change the bill on Sundays, you know. She said she recognized the characters and situation, but didn't take the play seriously; merely thought the author had 'a terrible nerve,' and that Anna ought to know."

"You say she recognized the characters——"

"Yes; and that brings me to a really important point. The author of that play never knew my Uncle Dallas."

Robertson had prepared me for this, but there still stuck in my mind the impression of that pleasant old man in the play, a portrayal so lifelike and so sympathetic. I said something of this sort to Caldwin.

"Sympathetic? I believe you," said

he. "If the devil were portrayed as sympathetically as that, we should all be impatient to meet him. This is not to say that Uncle Dallas didn't have his better moments; I always liked him well enough. But Anna used to say that the best description of him was formulated by a Portuguese chemist who was an assistant in the laboratory for a time—they never stayed long. This man came to the end of his endurance, and handed in his resignation to me. I urged him to reconsider.

"'No, sir,' said he in his broken English, 'what I have stand for, it is enough. Your uncle is fine chemist, sure yes. Sometimes fine man, too; but most times, *perfectly dog!*'

"In fact," Caldwin went on, "the difference between Uncle Dallas and the old gentleman in the play is so extreme and so effective in giving a tone to the whole story, that I can fancy a friend of ours sitting through the play without being reminded of our family, despite the portraits of Anna and myself."

"Where did Archer get your portrait?" said I. "You never met him?"

Caldwin shook his head.

"If you ask me, I think he got it from Madame Jeune," said he. "She'd seen all the rest of us, but never Uncle Dallas."

"Madame Jeune? Did she know the story of the family?"

"Just about well enough to make all the mistakes that occur in this play. For example, she may have known that Uncle Dal desired a marriage between Anna and me, as a means of keeping Anna from making too much trouble. What Madame Jeune certainly did *not* know was that every time my uncle urged Anna to marry me it delayed the wedding six months. You see, it reminded her that I was a Caldwin, and that was her chief objection to me.

"As for my portrait, I used to visit the dressmaking establishment quite often, with the girls, especially when Anna was having her mourning clothes made. Oh, yes, the woman knew me sufficiently well, and she could communicate what she knew. She had an odd faculty of portraying character in a few words; they say it's a Yankee gift; she comes from New Hampshire. Anna used to draw her out, being interested in that sort of thing."

I remembered how Madame Jeune had given me Redfield so distinctly.

"Caldwin," said I, "this looks like the beginning of a rational theory. What did Redfield say to it?"

"He seemed to take hold intelligently," Caldwin replied. "Of course the affair of the letter fits in, but I didn't mention that, as you and I had more or less agreed to keep it quiet."

He walked to the window and threw out the stub of his cigarette; then stretched himself and said: "It's late. I must let you go to bed."

"But what's been done about Madame Jeune?" I asked, following him toward the door.

"Nothing," said he; "nothing at all. They've merely questioned her. Good night, old chap. It's such a relief to have you here. Shall I get you a drink before you turn in?"

I declined with thanks; but a few minutes later he brought me a long glass full of something purple. He called it "denatured grape juice;" spiked, I suppose, with liquor of some sort.

I drank a swallow or two in his presence, and it tasted as if it might be very pleasant under proper conditions; but when Caldwin was gone I threw the rest of it away. I felt as if I were drinking poison. Nonsense, of course, but there was no use trying to enjoy that drink.

Sleep came quickly, but it was infested with hideous dreams, from one of which I woke still believing that a bloodstained monster had got its forepaws on my bed.

"Get away!" I roared in the strangled voice of nightmares. "Get out of here!"

And then, in the moonlight, I saw a robed figure by the dressing table.

"Don't be alarmed," said Caldwin's slow and equable voice. "It's only I."

"What's wanted?"

"I couldn't sleep," said he; "and it

struck me that perhaps I could get something out of your bag without disturbing you." He put the bag back on the table. "You don't mind, I hope."

"Not at all," said I. "That's all right. But if you need anything, you'd better let me give it to you."

I got up and turned on a light, and gave Caldwin a dose for his nerves. What I did for my own nerves, after he had gone, was to fasten the door behind him. I had to fasten it with a chair, for the key was missing.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WAITING GAME LOSES.

For a long hour I lay awake, waiting for I knew not what, and wearying my mind with fancies disguised as processes of the reason. Why had Caldwin come to my room? He had explained it plausibly; he had shown no flurry when discovered, nor the least excitement at any stage of the proceedings; yet my mind was readier to believe that he had come to put a dynamite bomb on my breastbone than to credit his simple story. Fairness to Caldwin had become impossible to my imagination, though I tried not to let my judgment follow it.

He had come to get my bag, and he had meant to take it to his room. So much he had admitted, for he certainly would not have made a light that would have waked me, nor have dosed himself in the dark. I totally disbelieved that a sleeping potion was what he had sought, and perhaps he would have invented another explanation if I had not caught him with the bag in his hands, and too far from the table to replace it quickly enough.

What had been his real intent?

A hundred foolish conjectures had come into my mind, and had floated away into the moonshine where they belonged, when I heard a faint noise at the door. It was repeated, just a trifle louder, and then there was silence. I cursed myself for the chair which had blocked his entrance; I might have pretended to be asleep, and have watched his performance, perhaps have followed him to his room. But the harm was done and could not be remedied. Even while I seemed to be busy with regrets an odd change overswept my surroundings, and behold, the room was full of daylight, and I had waked from hours of sleep.

There had remained with me one notion not quite so absurd as the others. It was barely possible that Caldwin had meant to tamper with the contents of the tubes in my kit, intending that I should use some injurious drug in treating Marian, or that a fatal blunder should be charged against me after he himself had given her a poison.

How such a design could be brought to any practical result I could not see. Marian would be in Robertson's care, not mine, and it would require fine trickery to involve me in the case at all. Yet the idea, if he could force it into execution, would be admirable, and sure to win enthusiastic applause in the infernal regions.

As I suspected Caldwin, it was quite possible that he suspected me; felt my distrust of him, and regarded me as a dangerous enemy who was hunting him down. Nothing could be neater than to maneuver me into the position of a doctor charged with a dreadful error in practice. Of course, I should accuse Caldwin, without the smallest atom of tangible evidence; and whatever I might allege against him in regard to previous crimes would be discredited as a measure of resentment and defense on my part.

Unable to give this fantasy any semblance of reality, I tried to put it out of my mind, but there was nothing to take its place, and it wouldn't go. Worrying over it while dressing, I happened to notice the long glass which had contained the purple drink. Perhaps an ounce of fluid remained, mostly melted ice. I poured it into a bottle, washing the inside of the glass carefully so as to get all that was possible of the original contents. Caldwin would have wished me to sleep well, and he was a chemist.

I had barely finished this work when there came a gentle knock. With the

stealthy tread of an elephant climbing a tree I moved to the door, every floor board creaking under me, and softly took the chair from below the knob.

"Come in," said I; and Caldwin entered, dressed with somber elegance, and with his black hair beautifully brushed to each side of his fine, womanly forehead.

"Good morning, doctor," said he, most amiable. "I have to thank you for a night of sleep which will help me through this dreadful day."

"Have you heard from Marian?" I asked.

"Yes," said he; "I've seen her. She's up and about. Robertson is here, and one or two others."

It came to me then that I must talk with Robertson, but what could I say to him that would do any good? What reasonable grounds had I for filling his head with evil dreams? Still, it had to be done; and indeed it proved less difficult than I had supposed. He accepted what I told him as a record of observations which it was my duty to communicate, but which neither of us could understand sufficiently to permit of an inference. I gave him the whole story of my suspicion against Caldwin, and he received it with the calm appropriate to a mind long schooled in scientific thinking.

"If the truth of this affair is ever discovered," he said, "it will probably take somewhat this form: Dallas Caldwin's death was due to natural causes, but it was made the basis of a conspiracy to extort money. Anna Kingsley who had long tortured herself between love for Clement and distrust of him—based chiefly on the extreme difference of their characters—was driven insane, not by threats or terrors for herself or Clement, but by a long and agonizing concentration of her peculiar mind acting in solitude without counsel or support.

"She tried to attain a certainty as to the allegations made by those who tormented her—a scientific demonstration, impossible under the conditions. As to her death, whether there was ever any exine in the laboratory, or it was got by the blackmailers, I don't know and may never find out; but in some manner the infernal stuff came into Anna's hands, and she killed herself with it, in a moment of maniacal depression. That is not what I wish to believe, but it is the common-sense view, I'm afraid."

Robertson thought very little of the affair of last night. He believed that Caldwin had told me the truth; seemed to see something characteristic in his having wandered to my room to drug himself into sleep. As to Caldwin's having come again to my door, Robertson was skeptical. He suspected that I had dreamed it.

He feared nothing for Marian from her cousin, but promised to exercise unwearying caution, and to consult with me at frequent intervals. For the present, and probably forever, it would be best for us to hold the matter as a secret between ourselves. He very kindly pointed out to me the weakness of my theories, and the futility of discussing them with the police. The dead could not be recalled. The interests of the living would be better served by my continuing on good terms with Caldwin and Marian.

"The girl will come out from this shadow, and you will return from across the water, doubtless with a record of fine service," said he in conclusion; "and for my part, the oftener I see you in this house, the better I shall be pleased. I love Marian like a father, and am very critical of the men she meets. You're big enough to displace any two of them," he added with a smile, "and though it should be the best two, I'll be glad to see you do it."

I saw Marian for a few minutes, and she spoke to me very sweetly. She was under great strain, but I detected no sign of dangerous weakness. Her thoughts were centered upon having Anna at home, but that had all been arranged, and there was nothing for me to do.

On my way uptown I stopped at Columbia, and intrusted the purple contents of a small bottle to a friend of

mine in the chemical department. He promised me a report at the earliest possible moment.

In my office, I took all the tubes out of my bag, supplying their place with others. It was a perfect certainty that Caldwin had not turned any trick with them, in a dark room, and that it had not been his intention to do it there; still I felt better when they were put away.

I had bought the morning papers, and was already aware that the inner history of the Caldwin household was beginning to come out. There was not very much of it as yet, but enough to open the way for the remainder.

Some of Ward's press agency seemed to be taking effect. Caldwin was decidedly the sympathetic figure in stories, a man on whom a terrible affliction had fallen like a shot from a hidden marksman far away.

The dread of libel necessitated the most cautious treatment of the theory of blackmail. The simplest and most outspoken account favored the idea that Archer had learned the story of the Caldwin-Kingsleys from Madame Jeune of whom he had made inquiries about Agnes Carey merely because she was a pretty girl, and he was interested in her. Then he had written his screen play from this material with perfectly innocent intentions. Some one among the many persons who must have gained a knowledge of the play in the course of its production had organized the blackmailing plot as a private venture.

I speak of this as the best account, but it could not stand examination. The matter of exine and the test in the play were not explained; and the general effect of so smooth a narrative with an omission so vital, was that of a man in evening dress without a shirt. None of the articles supplied me with an atom of new information.

The day brought no important developments. Next morning, virtually the whole truth about Dallas Caldwin's pecuniary transactions, and the resulting stress and strain within the household, was made public. There was a more marked tendency to treat Anna Kingsley's death as a suicide. This was the day when she was laid to rest. I was present at the house and at the grave, Marian herself having asked me to attend.

On Saturday morning one of the papers treated the case sensationally as a criminal mystery with which the police were making no progress. An attack on Archer and Madame Jeune was begun. Archer responded with a suit for libel, the Kams backing him strongly. Madame Jeune, with what seemed to me a higher wisdom, took to her bed.

Not even in the article referred to was there more than a suggestion that Miss Kingsley might have been murdered. That theory, though so helpful to a newspaper sensation, seemed to have been dropped by all. The case was taking a perfectly simple and definite shape, beneath all verbal disguises: A man who had defrauded his stepdaughter, and had made only a tricky restitution, had died suddenly under questionable circumstances; and as a sequel the young woman had been blackmailed by her dressmaker, with unknown confederates, and had been driven to suicide with the same poison which she had used to remove her stepfather.

There was plenty of obscuration but no real concealment. Any eye could see murderess written over Anna Kingsley's grave.

The pitiful thing was Marian's attempt to do something about it. More courage, more complete devotion I have never seen, nor any human effort more futile. Her fate was not failure alone; it was derision. No enemy was visible in a clear light. The girl exhausted herself against no tangible resistance, merely beating her wings in a fog.

And to add the last unfortunate element, her lawyer, Sturgis, lost his temper with the newspapers, and encouraged Marian to begin legal actions. It was impossible that they should result in any vindication of her sister. They would serve only to keep the hopeless fight always in her mind for a year

or more, thus depriving her of the healing virtue of time.

I saw her very often, at first through Robertson's urgency. He flattered me by saying that I was the only person who exerted a good influence. It is true that I could lure Marian out of doors, and sometimes draw her mind away from the single topic. She rode with me almost every day, but usually for only a few minutes. Two or three times, however, I carried her into the country, where we left the car and walked in rough byways or climbed hills. Temporary improvement resulted, but the gain was more than lost betweenwhiles.

I saw the same tendency in her that Robertson had spoken of as the cause of Anna's destruction. The unity of her nature permitted a mental concentration so sustained and sharp that her bodily strength couldn't endure it. In default of speedy relief a collapse was certain.

That was what I feared, not wholly on its own account, but because of the opportunity which her illness would afford. I still held my opinion as to Caldwin. I was afraid of him. The more I studied him, the more clearly I beheld him as a criminal type, morally insensitive, and decidedly the sort of man who would be capable of destroying a family in order to collect in his own pocket the money of all.

To support so injurious an opinion I had one new bit of evidence and no more. My friend in Columbia had reported that the purple drink contained a chemically recognizable amount of a modern synthetic drug used to induce sleep, not a poison in the usual sense. If Caldwin had thought it worth while to drug me, his design must have been of consequence, and Marian was certainly the person ultimately threatened. My wakefulness had spoiled that plan at so early a stage as to leave it unintelligible to me; but I knew that he would either try it again or make another, if Marian's illness should give him the opportunity.

If these fears had a source in an objective reality, Marian's safety lay in separation from Caldwin; but how could this be brought about? The business of the girl's life was the defense of her sister, and she regarded Cousin Clement as a principal ally. She wished to consult with him as often as possible. Two friends of Marian's were visiting her, and some war work was being done in the house, Marian participating with her hands, but no longer with her mind. It would be virtually impossible to alter the arrangement without urgent reason. And certainly I couldn't offer such a reason; couldn't present an accusation against Caldwin, the grounds of which I hardly dared attempt to measure in my own thoughts.

My case must be strengthened, and in the hope of gaining a hint I had a talk with Redfield, just two weeks after Anna Kingsley's death. Here is the gist of what he said:

"This case is up against a stone wall at every point of the compass. Suspicions run around inside, squealing like rats, but none of them can get out and go anywhere.

"I think Dallas Caldwin was murdered, but I can't prove it. In court the contrary would be shown.

"I believe that Anna Kingsley was blackmailed on account of that crime, but there isn't a scrap of evidence to support me. I can't show a payment of money to anybody, or a demand for one dollar.

"In my opinion Gergory S. Archer and Madame Jeune were parties to this conspiracy; but I can't prove that they ever saw each other, or that either of them ever joined with any other person to do anything unlawful in this matter.

"I know that Anna Kingsley was killed with exine, but I don't know where she got it, or whether it was in her own possession or that of some one else. I can't offer evidence that any person concerned in this affair has made or purchased exine, nor can I trace an atom of that poison to its source. I've questioned everybody now alive who has worked in the Caldwin

laboratory within two years, and I've learned nothing.

"I suspect that Anna Kingsley was murdered by a man who met her in the theater, by appointment, but I don't know who he was, and can't find out. I was led, partly by you, to figure that it might have been Caldwin, but on the night when he saw the private exhibition of that play at the Kam studios I had my witnesses present, and not one of them identified him. He seemed to me to put on a new manner that night; acted kind of rough; but he did it damn well, and I can't prove that he did it at all. I've got nothing on Caldwin.

"I did hope for a confession from Madame Jeune, but it isn't coming. No; we can forget all the usual helps in blind cases—conscience, and blowing money, and drink, and the weakening of some member of the conspiracy. None of these things will appear in this affair.

"In short, I've got a crime here whose inside workings I can't explain, and whose author I can't discover. It stands now as the suicide of a woman who murdered her stepfather. That view is wrong and unjust, on which point I'll stake my life against an inch of wind in the keyhole of an empty house; but the persons who hold the opinion contrary to mine have got all the best of the argument.

"For two weeks the police and the newspapers have been investigating this crime, and they haven't gone ahead as far as the distance between my thumb and finger when I pinch them together like that. Nobody knows anything, but the verdict is rendered against Anna Kingsley, and the case is practically closed."

I suggested that these difficult cases were sometimes solved at last.

"Yes," he responded; "when a party gets away with a crime, absolutely so we can't corner him, still there's a method by which the police occasionally win out. We wait till the party does something else in the same line, and then nail him for that."

I knew what something else in the same line would be, and I couldn't wait.

CHAPTER XV.

A DUEL OF NERVE.

In the afternoon of the second day following this conversation, I rang up Caldwin by telephone from a pay station on my way home. He was at the laboratory. He asked me where I was, and I told him.

"What are you doing?" said I. "Anything urgent?"

"Not especially," he answered. "I'm at your service, dear boy, if you want me."

"I wish you'd come up to my house," I said. "I've run upon something which it is necessary for me to discuss with you."

"I understand," said Caldwin. "We'd better say no more by telephone. I shall be able to get away in about fifteen minutes. Will that be too soon?"

"No, indeed," I responded.

My preparations for receiving this visitor were already made. We were to have a talk in a room whose existence was one of my reasons for taking the apartment. It was a spacious room, remote from my office, and I had kept the professional suggestion out of it, furnishing with stuff I used at college, and decorating with some of the plunder accumulated in those days. Caldwin had been to see me before, but I had not shown him this part of the premises.

On reaching home I sent my servant away with a note for Lieutenant Redfield; and then I sat in my den, waiting for Caldwin's ring. Instead, there came a tap at the door, and when I opened it Caldwin stood in my private hall.

"I hope you don't mind my having come right in," said he. "Your outer door was ajar."

I knew better. I suspected him of having stolen a key from a desk drawer in my office. The key had disappeared, as I happened to have noticed.

He came in; praised the room, and viewed some of the souvenirs with his peculiar interest, more like that of a

high-bred, languid woman. Among other things some baseball bats took his eye, and he picked out one on which an admiring friend had burned a date, years ago, with the hot end of a cigarette. Caldwin, by the way, was not smoking, for once in his life.

"Is this *the* bat?" said he. "Still sound and good, eh?"

"Good as ever," I replied. "I used it this spring at the country club. We had quite a fast nine out there."

It must be mentioned that, ten years ago, and for I don't know how long afterward, a trifling footnote to the annals of sport ascribed to me the honor of the longest hit ever made in a ball game. It was on professional grounds in New York, in a play-off with Yale, and it brought home three tallies which were just enough to win. My dubious laurels have been worn by many others since that day.

Caldwin examined the bat, and eventually laid it on a library table in the middle of the room. On an end of this table there was an assemblage of things veiled from sight by a large square of white cloth somewhat stained with chemicals. To this unusual object Caldwin paid not the slightest attention—which was as characteristic of him as his interest in a ball bat at such a time and on such an errand.

We sat down with the comparatively bare end of the table between us.

"Did you know that Archer has been dischargd by the Kams?" I began.

"No," said Caldwin. "Why did they do it?"

"For fraud," said I. "Archer had drawn money to which he was not entitled, and he was going to get a lot more. He had a contract with the Kams by which he performed editorial duties at a salary of a hundred dollars a week. In this capacity he read scenarios which were submitted, and turned them back or recommended them for acceptance by the committee which passed final judgment—in effect, Napoleon Kam himself.

"But Archer also wrote screen plays for the company, and for every one of his which was accepted he received a thousand dollars down, and a varying royalty which was highest on the so-called 'Thrillers.' All in all, his job was worth about forty thousand dollars a year, and the figure would have gone much higher, for of course his No. 11 is now tremendously advertised and will be a mint. The name Archibald Grew has greatly increased in value, and though Archer didn't own it, most of his original plays carried that signature. So you see the man has suffered a heavy loss. He is discredited besides—or will be when the thing is known—and may find it hard to make another connection."

"Just what did he do?" said Caldwin.

"He stole Thriller No. 11," I replied. "The author brought it in, and Archer read it, and saw a barrel of money in it. So he told the author that the play was impossible; the censor wouldn't let it be shown, and no producing company would dare to touch it. The author believed him, and destroyed the manuscript in his presence. There was a grate fire in the room; the Kam offices are very luxurious."

Caldwin half rose from his chair, and groped in his pocket for his cigarette case which he drew forth and then thrust back again.

"Wasn't there something in that letter about destroying a manuscript?" he said. "I suppose this fellow means to pretend that Anna wrote the play. Of course that's impossible. I think the whole thing is a trick, don't you?"

He felt in another pocket, and pulled out a cigar case, while I studied him, in silence.

"I beg pardon, old man, but I *must* smoke," he went on. "I'll be too nervous without it. And knowing that you hate cigarette smoke, I've brought some cigars. Let's light up, and then get to the bottom of this matter."

He let two cigars slide from the case to the table.

If the cigar case had been an ax, and Caldwin had said to me: "Now, dear boy, if you'll hold your head this way, I'll crop it off," I should have felt much the same. I didn't merely sus-

pect that the cigars were drugged with exine; I knew they were. Doubt had no residence within me.

"Thank you," said I, taking one of them and playing the connoisseur with it. "I smoke seldom, but I enjoy a good cigar. This seems to be a special brand."

"A favorite of mine," he responded pleasantly. "You'll like it."

Doubtless, I should never use any other kind, if I smoked this one to the end; but did Caldwin really expect me to do it? The trick had a look of silliness, as if it might have been the idea of a degenerate child; but perhaps it didn't look the same to Caldwin. I pulled myself up with a tight rein, perceiving which of us would be the greater fool, if I should suppose that I saw the whole of his design at the first glance. The outrageous nerve of the man had stupefied me, and I felt the need of going slowly.

Caldwin couldn't have known which of the cigars I should select, therefore both must be poisoned. I waited to see what he would do with his. He glanced about for matches. I had none; they were on a desk behind me. I got them, trying to keep an eye on him all the time and still be natural. I failed, but he succeeded. Both his hands dropped below the table, out of my sight, but there wasn't the slightest awkwardness or haste about it. Still, I knew that he had exchanged his cigar for another of the same appearance.

"Let's see what Archer says in that letter," said he, when I returned with the matches. He took it from the breast of his coat, and of course the drugged cigar went into the pocket where the letter had been.

He had won the first point, and there was no use in forcing him to the trifling inconvenience of smoking a cigar against his appetite. A spirit of emulation entered into me; I resolved to equal my amiable friend in suavity.

"You'd prefer a cigarette, I'm sure," said I. "Don't make a martyr of yourself. Really, I insist."

"Thank you; that's awfully good of you," said he, putting the cigar away and getting out the cigarette case. "I'm a fiend, I guess."

He meant a cigarette fiend, but if I had been describing him, I should have let it go as it stood, omitting any qualifying word.

Caldwin lighted a cigarette, and pushed the matches toward me. I clipped the end of the cigar with a cutter nervously; took a match, and toyed with it, watching his face. He confronted me, agreeable as the family cat beside the fire after tea. His countenance was adorned with his peculiar, kindly smile that tilted the left corner of his mouth a little higher than the other. He waited for me to light the cigar; and when I didn't do it, he was still content as he bent his head to peruse Archer's letter.

It flashed upon me suddenly that Caldwin had put his life into my hands. If the cigar was drugged with exine, I had only to retain it for analysis, and he was lost. But what did that really imply? Simply that he wouldn't let me retain it. He had indeed staked his life, and against mine, and he meant to win. He preferred to kill me with exine, and I knew why; it was a good game. But if it failed, he would kill me with something else. He had entered my house secretly, and he would take the chance of leaving it unseen. There was a weapon in his pocket, and he knew that I had run him down, and that the issue between us must be settled now.

In the excitement of that thought I came very near doing something which would have been equivalent to suicide. I had sent for Redfield. At the earliest, he would arrive in half an hour, but it might be much longer. My messenger might not find him at the station. Yet as a defensive measure I was on the point of telling Caldwin that Redfield might appear at any moment. If I had done so, it is probable that I shouldn't have lived ten seconds. Caldwin would have shot me before I could have laid hands on the ball bat, my only weapon, which he had set against the end of the table where it was not easily within my reach.

"To my mind," said Caldwin, "this letter was certainly written after Anna's death, with the purpose of deceiving us, but I fail to see the man's real intention. What were the circumstances of his confession?"

"I wrote out that letter of his, as nearly as I could from memory," said I, "and took it to Napoleon Kam whom I convinced after a strenuous argument. At my suggestion he gave me the scenario, and Marian made a pen copy of it with erasures and corrections—like an original draft. She and I went to Napoleon Kam's office with this, and he called Archer in, and told him that Marian had found the original among her sister's papers. Of course that was what Archer had feared as the one thing that could beat him; but he made a hard fight for his forty thousand a year. It was not until he was thoroughly convinced that Kam would send him to prison that he acknowledged defeat. There is no possible doubt that his confession is true."

"And Marian helped you?" said Caldwin. "Frankly, I'm a little hurt, and I wish you would tell me why you persuaded her to refrain from consulting me. It savors of distrust."

Nothing but words, of course. The man was merely waiting for me to light that cigar. As soon as he was thoroughly persuaded that I wouldn't do it, he would resort to his alternative measure. Still he had a motive for delay in his desire to extract from me whatever I might know.

I held the cigar in my fingers like a pen, and used it to emphasize my gestures.

"We fear you haven't been entirely open with us, Caldwin," said I. "If Miss Anna Kingsley wrote that play, it means that she suspected you of having killed your uncle. I am distressed to say such a thing, but it is the plain fact. Miss Kingsley must have accused you of that crime. You denied it, and she lacked the proof. For months that secret and grim strife was waged in your house."

"And the play?" said Caldwin quietly.

"Miss Kingsley was an experimenter," I replied, "and in such a situation she would not have failed to study the experiments of others. So notable a figure as *Hamlet*, prince of Denmark, could hardly have escaped her attention. He was a dramatist, if you remember, to the extent of writing some dozen or sixteen lines into a scene, when he designed to catch the conscience of the king. In plain words, she believed that she could write a play which you, being taken unawares, could not witness in her presence without betraying yourself. Not legal evidence, of course, but the end of her own doubts was what she sought—like the illustrious personage whose method she adopted."

"This seems nonsense," said Caldwin.

"So did a flying machine, not long ago," I retorted, "but it succeeded."

"I don't quite get your meaning."

"Her play was produced, fraudulently indeed, yet extremely well; and *you saw it in her presence.* Before the performance was concluded, she took off the ring which she had doubtless vowed within herself to wear till she was sure."

"Pardon me," said Caldwin, "is this a theory which might be based upon the fact—if it is a fact—that Anna wrote that play; or is it in some degree your own opinion?"

"It is my opinion," said I, striking a match which I had been covertly holding so that its usefulness would be destroyed by the cold sweat in the palm of my hand. The match obliged me by failing to ignite.

Caldwin watched that failure with his subdued, polite, afternoon-tea attention, and then his glance moved to the mound of white cloth.

"Would you mind telling me what you have there?" said he. "I should suspect some kind of chemical apparatus under that cover."

He would be quite right. This was the apparatus for the exine test shown in the play, and I had intended to spring it on Caldwin for his confusion; but now a sharp and final triumph over him

was just what I most anxiously desired to avoid. Time was my best friend.

"We'll come to that a little later," said I.

"Oh, no," he remonstrated mildly; "let's have all the cards in front of us, face up." He made an apologetic gesture; stretched out an arm, and lifted a corner of the cloth. "Seems to be the exine test. May I inquire what you're doing with it?"

"Experimenting," said I. "Would you like to examine the outfit?"

"What I should like," said Caldwin, "is an explanation of your attitude toward me. What do you imagine yourself to have discovered? Surely I am entitled to a clear statement."

He said it very well, but what he really desired was to learn how much of the case against himself I had reserved in my own bosom, and how much I had told to Marian, to Redfield, and to others. If I were out of the way, and the material evidence in this room destroyed, would there be a chance for him? In fact there would have been a chance. The material evidence was *all* here, and what I had told to other persons could not be supported without it, but would be only hearsay, in a court.

I might have lied to Caldwin, but the right inspiration did not come to me, and besides I was ashamed to do it from such a motive, mere animal terror for my life. I decided to tell the truth, and waste as much time about it as possible, hoping that my sincerity would "get over," and would hold him in waiting for the last word.

I was like a man making a speech on the scaffold; my life might be preserved if I could interest the executioner long enough for that rescue to arrive which he did not expect. There was a clock within my view, and the hands were really moving, though I had often doubted it in the last twenty-five minutes. The moment was approaching when I might begin to hope for Redfield. Caldwin would hardly dare to take extreme measures while the doorbell was actually ringing—though there was another way out, unfortunately—and if he should prevent me from going to the door, Redfield would break it in. I hadn't told the whole story in my note, but Redfield knew that my intention was to accuse Caldwin of murder.

From a dry throat I now proceeded to tell Caldwin how he had betrayed himself to me by his one fatal mistake. I tried to preserve an unemotional manner equal to his own, partly because this was a duel of nerve in which a life was to be lost by the first man who broke, and partly for the help which a moderate tone gave me in wasting time. I kept the cigar always in my hand, as if I might light it at any moment, and this seemed to have a good effect on my opponent. I was even tempted to take a few puffs, thinking that the poison probably was an inch or more down, but the idea of putting it to my lips seemed always to bring the image of Anna Kingsley visibly before me, arousing an anger against Caldwin which was disturbing to the external serenity that I was anxious to maintain.

I described from my own side the incidents of my night in his guest chamber, when he had come ostensibly for a sleeping draft. His story had not convinced me; I had believed he meant harm to Marian through bedeviling the medicines in my bag. But I had not been able to see how this trick could be made to operate; and in puzzling over that point I had remembered Caldwin's excessive readiness to oblige me by taking my bag back to the hotel from the hospital, after he had learned that Anna Kingsley could not be recalled to life.

With this idea—when Redfield had discouraged me as to any hope from the police—I had examined the tablets in that tube which Caldwin, as a chemist, would have supposed to be the one I especially wanted in the effort to save Anna. The uppermost tablet and the next beneath it, viewed under a magnifying glass, showed that they had been tampered with. They had been made to absorb a fluid, and this had been done very cleverly, by one who

was so skillful that he could work with certainty in the few minutes at Caldwin's disposal, in Ward's sitting room after my request for the bag had come to him.

With the apparatus now close to Caldwin's hand I had tested a portion of each tablet, reserving the remainder for a more competent chemist. The test had worked beautifully; the presence of exine in each sample was as sure as death. And I now knew that Caldwin had attempted to trick me into treating Anna Kingsley with a dose of the very drug which had stricken her down. If a spark of life had lingered in her body, undoubtedly I should have extinguished it.

And when I said this to Caldwin—when I looked across at the man, sitting there with his little crooked smile now half changed into a sneer—it was as much as I could do to stay in my chair. He knew it; his hand was in a side pocket of his coat, ready to shoot on the instant. And it is what he ought to have done; the only thing which could avert his punishment; and that knowledge restrained me from springing on him.

The proof would be clear, I said, that he was the man who had sat with Anna in the box at the theater on the evening of her death. She had seen the play on the previous evening, after the word from Madame Jeune; and in my opinion had made some sort of appointment with Caldwin, next forenoon, when she found him at his breakfast, by which they were to attend the theater that evening. Of course she had not told him what he was to see; she had mentioned perhaps another feature of the bill as something that attracted her. In order to disguise the gravity of the matter she had bought the candies, and had received him when he came to the box with as much of her old-time gayety as she had thought would be credible. Why he had not accompanied her to the play I did not know—and at that, Caldwin who for a moment had rested his head on his left hand, looked up.

"I was to go with her, of course," he said; "but I told her from Ward's rooms that I would meet her instead. It isn't known that I spoke with her, but I did. She learned where I was, from a servant, and called me up, but not from the house."

He made a move to light his cigarette, then dropped it on the floor.

"You're right enough about all this," he said. "I'm beaten. I made a useless error, and it has ruined me. But why in the devil's name you didn't go to sleep, that night in my house, I don't know."

I told him why. He scowled, the first time I had ever seen him do it, but his countenance cleared presently, and he began to speak in a way which let me know that the whole story was coming. You may be assured that I didn't interrupt him; under the circumstances I could listen as long as he could talk. He condemned himself with astonishing penetration as to his character, and yet he spoke with vanity never absent in that type of criminal, and different in him by only the polite restraint which covered the offense.

"You suspected me from the beginning," he said. "You have never liked me. An instinct turned you away from me, long ago, in college. I used to feel it, in those days. You were the popular man; you had a following. But since I met you at Ward's after the banquet, I declare to you that I have admired and loved you solely because of your lack of kindness for me. And even now I prefer you to any other person on earth, for you are all one substance, from skin to gizzard, and your surface is as hard as your heart.

"You don't know what it is to be a man like me, compounded of a dozen races, and with intelligence and scientific education to understand what it means. What is right for one part of me is wrong for another; and the different racial strains mature unequally, and triumph in a downward succession. I have cultivated an admiration or a virtue only to abandon it, often with great pain, as the ancestor who loved it has died in my vitals.

"So a man of my type grows up like

a child in a discordant home, hating all its associations. I tell you, I had come to hate my own virtues, such as they were, and especially that kindness which is fastened upon me like a disfiguring disease of the skin, not in the blood.

"There was a strain in me like that of which Anna and Marian are completely made, but it has perished. Once it may have been a bond of union with Anna; she may have loved me for it, as if it were a dead child of ours. But in the end I came to hate Anna and to destroy her, as I have hated and destroyed successively my own better parts while the worse grew always stronger and more harsh.

"Let me free my mind of these secrets"—with a touch of vanity for their magnitude. "There is nothing to tell you about the death of my uncle; it is all in the play, precisely rendered. And it is true that Anna suspected me, having a vague hint that I had made exine in the laboratory. She could prove nothing; and you are mistaken in supposing that she accused me. She merely told me the exact truth as to her doubt of me, as she had done before I was a murderer. How could I hide myself from her? She was instructed; she had method. Why, for years I was teaching her, in the laboratory, the very essence of the analysis which protected her against my love—if you care to give it so good a name.

"As I told Redfield on a sudden impulse, that night in the hospital, Anna was a deadly, dangerous adversary. I came to desire her death, for my own safety, and for her money, perhaps. Control of that business had become a prize worth anybody's effort. But it is a fact that I never really planned Anna's death until that evening at the Astor. Then I saw my chance, if you should put Ward to sleep. Of course there were desperate risks, almost too much for sanity to face, but you must remember that I was already in extreme peril.

"I could depend on Ward because he was interested with me in my larger contracts with the government—affairs of my own; I was not playing straight with Anna in the business. Ward had furnished capital and influence. Of course, I don't mean to say that he would have given me an alibi if he had known the truth; but men like Ward are the creatures of their prejudices. They have to be, in order to support the present reign of greed, and still bear to see their faces in a mirror.

"I left Ward's rooms and went to the theater. I had seen the play in the afternoon, having been suspicious of Anna when she made the engagement. I thought my previous view of the play would protect me, and indeed the danger seemed fanciful. That was probably what defeated me; I didn't realize how hard it is to see such a thing in measured representation, and give no sign—to receive and make the natural comments. In the midst of the play Anna took my ring from her finger, after tormenting me to madness by making me anticipate that act. For the first time she directly accused me of the murder of my uncle. Even then I couldn't believe that she had read anything in my face; I thought she must have found some tangible evidence. In fact I lost my head; my nerve weakened before hers.

"For a year I had been carrying several capsules of exine hidden in the end of a stylographic pen—as a precaution, you understand, in case I should be suddenly trapped. I took one of them out, unknown to Anna, and pressed it into a piece of candy from the box. She had kept offering me the candy, in the beginning of the ordeal; and you've no idea what it is possible to do with a trifle of that sort to shake a man's nerve in such circumstances. Anna knew those things, you see; she understood that only a superior sort of gentleman can refuse a piece of candy in a natural manner just as the electric chair comes into his view at the end of his path.

"I stepped behind her chair. In this position I was concealed from the audience. Anna looked up over her shoulder, with horror that I should be so near. She parted her lips to speak.

You may have noticed how quick I am with my hands. I pressed the poisoned candy between her lips; her teeth closed in a vain effort to repel it; and she died instantly."

While speaking the last few words Caldwin had risen.

"Will you permit me to lie down for a few minutes?" he said. "I feel faint."

I stepped to the end of the table to assist him; and suddenly he staggered, and put out both hands toward me. The cigar was between my fingers, and every man who is a smoker knows what I did—just as well as Caldwin had known it in advance. It is second nature. When there is haste to use the hands, so that the smoker cannot lay down his cigar, he drops it one time in ten thousand. The other nine hundred and ninety-nine times he sticks it into his mouth, as I did.

I dreamed that I was hanging by my chin from an iron bar on the under side of the suspension bridge over the Niagara River. I heard the rushing of the water far below, and knew that I must fall. The pain in my chin was so terrible that I wished to fall, but the life instinct strove within me and resisted—for immeasurable hours.

At last a conviction forced itself into my mind that Lieutenant Redfield was coming. It seemed difficult to remember this, and to keep in my consciousness the thought that if I could hold on a little longer, I should be saved. Then, after ages, I heard Redfield's voice, far away. It drew slowly nearer, and then suddenly I saw his face close to mine, while the roaring of the river under me became words of his:

"I tell you he's coming to. He's all right."

My teeth were clamped together with a dreadful violence, but I forced a thin voice through them.

"Caldwin!" said I. "Follow him!"

The lieutenant's face took on a strange look, and receded.

"Follow Caldwin?" I heard him say. "Hell; not if I can help it."

I insisted; and after an interval of confusion in which I seemed unable to hear what any one said, or make myself understood, I was told that Caldwin was dead. This was all I could gather on the subject; and later, when I found myself in another room, with Marian sitting beside my bed I felt a formless delicacy about asking her the truth of Caldwin's end, and his name was not spoken.

What had really happened is this: The first shock of the exine had not rendered me helpless, though my mind seems to have been temporarily extinguished, so that the interval is a blank and always will be. My bodily strength held on a little longer, however; and I pushed Caldwin away from me, and struck him with the bat which was close to my hand. In the same instant he fired upon me, but missed. The result of the single blow I struck is not to be described, barely to be credited. Even Redfield, hardened by his professional experience, does not like to think of it.

As for myself, I have suffered no lasting harm, though I lost my place in the corps that went abroad. What saved my life was the cigar cutter. There is reason to believe that in my nervousness I used it at least twice. So much of the end of the cigar was cut off that when I put it into my mouth I got barely a taste of the poison; enough to push me into the Styx—not so far but that I could crawl out on the near bank.

As for Caldwin, nothing could have been more merciful than my unconscious act. His earthly punishment for crimes most selfish and most cowardly was commuted to a single instant of terror, a single shock too brief to be translated into pain; no hopeless struggle in the courts, no long imprisonment with vile companions in the vestibule of death. He had scored a triumph, his heart was high with a new hope of safety, when the dream ended. So easily, so quickly, all the bonds that bound him to his ill-assorted nature were dissolved, and all the beckoning fiends within the chambers of his brain were blotted out in darkness.

Gumming Things Up

By Francis Lynde

Author of "His Eminence, the Devil," "Red Butte, Western," Etc.

Something was bewitching the Nevada Short Line. Pro-Germans were blamed, disgruntled employees were suspected, even the United States government came in for a share of odium; but it took "Scientific" Sprague to find the monkey wrench in the machinery. One senses, too, the intricate inside workings of the railroad world.

(*A Novelette*)

ANYBODY, even a weigher from the coaling chutes, or a yardman stumbling into the Brewster train dispatcher's office that cold February midnight to thaw himself out over the steam radiator, would have smelled trouble in the air the moment he stuck his head in at the door. Ball, first split-trick dispatcher, was humped over his wire table, rattling his key and swearing softly at a man seventy miles away in the Hophra foothills. Juniman, of the car-record wire, had come to scowl over Ball's shoulder at the train sheet on which the line of the night's entries paused abruptly with the freshly inked report of Number 12 passing Aguita at twelve-ten a. m.

Over on the other side of the room at the commercial wire, Lanterby, wading patiently through a hookful of freight-department replies to the day's crop of angry complaints from shippers all along the Short Line, broke in the middle of a sentence to listen to the sharp volley of dots and dashes chattering through Ball's sounder. Even Corbin, the new man on the second-train wire, left his chair and went to join Juniman in a frowning study of the train sheet.

As yet, as one might say, the trouble was only potential, and the threat of it was unnerving chiefly because harassing predicaments had latterly come to be the usual thing on the Short Line, rather than the exceptional. A giant rotary snowplow, headed eastward and pushed by two of the heaviest locomotives on the division, had broken down just as it had cleared the last of the drifts in the side cuttings on Silver Mountain. Getting a report of the breakdown through the Wire Silver Mine operator, Ball had given the plow crew orders to back up the line to Canby, a locomotive relay and repair station twenty-six miles west of Wire Silver. Opposing this back-up emergency order there had been nothing but Number 12, the eastbound night express, and this had been reported from Summit, forty-two miles west of Canby, as fifty minutes off its schedule.

This was the situation at eleven-thirty-five. With fifty minutes more than the schedule to spare on Number 12, there was ample time for the snowplow to reach Canby; time for its crew to sidetrack and turn in and be sound asleep before the delayed express should come along. Ball had filled his corncob pipe, and was settling down for his midnight smoke at twelve-ten when the report from Aguita, a non-stop station for the express, came trickling through his sounder:

"Number 12 passing Aguita twelve-ten, five minutes late."

Ball was mechanically writing the time figures in their proper square on the train sheet when he came suddenly alive to a startling fact; startling and wholly unaccountable. Train 12, reported fifty minutes late at Summit, should have been not less than fifty minutes late at Aguita, since it could scarcely have made up any time on the hill run between the two stations. But Aguita had just reported it only *five* minutes late, and that comfortable margin which he, Ball, had given the backing snowplow had dwindled to nothing—to less than nothing!

Saving up wrath against a day of judgment for the crazy or merely irresponsible operator at Summit, who had reported a train fifty minutes off time when he had probably meant to say five minutes, and cursing his own absent-mindedness which had led him to accept the glaring blunder without realizing that the clock on the wall was branding it as a forty-five-minute lie, Ball pounced upon his key and tried to get Lucerne, a station between Aguita and Canby. Lucerne was not a "night" telegraph office, but Ball knew that the sleeping telegraph operator will often waken at the sound of his own call. In the hope of arousing the Lucerne sleeper, Ball rattled his key until the hope died a natural death. Then he flung himself, figuratively speaking, upon Canby, his fat face gone pallid and fine little beads of perspiration starting out on his brow.

Here, again, to his growing horror, he found the wire lifeless, so far as any reply was concerned. Canby was a "night" office for train orders, and there was no reason why the Canby night man should not have answered at once; or rather there was a reason, though Ball could not know it. For, twenty minutes earlier, Clampitt, the Canby operator, finding his shack office growing chilly in the heart of the arctic night, had built up a hot fire in his cast-iron office stove, and with the stove glowing a cheerful red he was now sleeping peacefully in his chair before it.

"Suffering misery!" gritted the fat dispatcher, hammering despairingly at his key; "this isn't a man's railroad any more whatever—it's a stinkin' junk pile run by a lot of crazy lunatics that ought to be in jail, every damn' man of 'em! Anybody can have my job that wants it, and that goes! I'm through with the whole shootin' match after this!"

"You bet you're through, if you get those two trains together in a head-ender," said Juniman, wholly without malice. Then he added reflectively: "We were skinning along all right enough before the Washington politicians took us over."

"How much time have you got?" asked Corbin. He was the new man who had drifted in two weeks earlier from nobody knew just where, and had picked up the job on the second-train wire the day after Bozeman, the regular man, had enlisted in one of the railroad regiments.

"Twenty-seven minutes!" groaned Ball, who was still rattling his key in the Canby call. "Twenty-seven minutes before Twelve reaches Canby."

"And the plow runners got the order at Wire Silver at eleven-thirty-five? That would give them at least an hour to make the twenty-six miles to Canby and get in out of the way."

"I know," snapped the dispatcher. "But those big, new freight pullers are clumsy as the very devil, and the track is uphill and heavy with snow. Those fellows are thinking they've got the hour in addition to their running time, and they won't hurry."

Five of the precious twenty-seven minutes slipped away, and still there was no answer from Canby. By this time, Lanterby, entirely unable to fix his mind upon the freight-department hookful, had come to join the group at the dispatcher's table. "It's a bloody smash if you can't raise Canby," he prophesied gloomily. "Those fellows on the plow will just dawdle along. It fits in with everything that's been happening on this railroad since it became a government jerkwater."

Ball glanced up at the clock, swore painstakingly and comprehensively, and

with the reluctance of a man pronouncing sentence upon himself, gave the order for the general alarm to be turned in.

"Juniman, you may as well get Mr. Calmaine on the phone and tell him what we're in for. After he answers, you can call Mr. Maxwell. Lanterby, you get the shops on the local wire, and tell the watchman to blow the whistle for the wrecking outfit."

The two thus detailed went to the phones, and this left Corbin alone at the dispatcher's elbow.

"Anything for me to do?" he asked.

"What can you or anybody do—unless you can figure out some way to stop a thing that's already as good as done?" rasped Ball.

Corbin, a handsome, well-set-up young fellow, who looked as if he would be more in character drilling a company of soldiers than in tapping a key in a railroad telegraph office, took the printed time card and sat down at his own table to pore over it with his head in his hands. While he was striving to visualize the situation, with the two unwarned trains rushing toward each other somewhere between Wire Silver and Lucerne, the shop siren began to bellow its call for the wrecking crew, the raucous shrieks rising and falling on the wintry blast like the yellings of a lost soul.

Five minutes later, while Corbin was still studying the time card, the door beyond the dividing rail was flung open and Calmaine, the superintendent, hastened in, his overcoat buttoned awry, and his collar and tie missing to prove that he had wasted no time in answering the alarm call.

"How about it?" he demanded of Ball.

The dispatcher shook his head. "Nothing doing, I'm sorry to say: I've been calling Canby for fifteen minutes without a break, and he doesn't answer."

"Has Mr. Maxwell been notified?"

"Yes; at the same time you were."

Corbin took his eyes from the time-table long enough to let them rest for a thoughtful moment upon the white-faced official coming through the railing gate to take his place beside the dispatcher. Character shows most clearly under stress, not less in a man's face than in his acts. Calmaine's clean-cut, scholarly features were not weak, even under the haggard linings of keen anxiety, Corbin decided. But the face and the shocked horror in it stamped the youngish superintendent as a man who had risen through a line of office promotion, and not from the sturdier rank and file which meets danger daily and sups and sleeps with it.

Mechanically adding this conclusion to the mental jottings he had been faithfully making for two entire weeks, Corbin turned back to his study of the time card, and he had hardly done so when he made a discovery that set the blood racing through his veins. In the notes in the back of the time card there was a small-type line giving the location and telegraph call of a second wire installation at Canby; namely, in the small, three-stalled engine house in which the relay engines were sheltered. It was a late addition to the wire service, which was perhaps the reason why Ball had overlooked or forgotten it. Since it was not a train-order installation, and was used exclusively by the motive-power department for quick communication between the little repair shop and the big one in Brewster, it was cut in on the second-train wire only, and the key for that wire lay under Corbin's fingers.

The crisis was by now fairly at hand—a catastrophic climax in which the loss of a few seconds might spell horrible disaster; yet the new man hesitated. For a special reason of his own—one of the reasons which had brought him two-thirds of the way across the continent—there was another man whose face he wished to study while its mask might be slipped aside under the stress of sudden and sharp anxiety: the face of Mr. Richard Maxwell, the peppery little general manager and autocrat of the Nevada Short Line. Corbin reasoned that Maxwell would not be far behind his superintendent in answering the alarm call, and he was

right. But in the meantime a train-load of innocent travelers was rushing to destruction.

On the spur of the moment a time-gaining expedient suggested itself. Perhaps it would be possible to forestall the disaster without advertising the fact to the group about the dispatcher's table. Thrusting a pen under the armature bar of his sounder so that only the feeble tapping of the relay would respond to the opening and closing of the circuit, the new man flicked his key switch and tapped out the Canby engine-house call, hoping that the noise of Ball's sounder, which was still rattling out the Canby station call, would nullify his own effort—as it did. To his profound relief the reply from the engine house came swiftly. "G-S C-E," it snipped in, and without a break Corbin shot the warning message through: "Send man quick flag 12 hold for orders. Answer."

With the circuit closed, Corbin bent low over his instruments to listen for the reply. Never having been over the Western Division, he knew nothing of the topographies, or how far the rescuing messenger would have to go to cover the distance between the engine house and the station.

While he listened, with every sense adding its acuteness to that of hearing, a door slammed in the lower story of the building, there were hurried footsteps on the stair, and then a square-shouldered, stocky man with a red face, fiery eyes and a cropped mustache in which the gray was just beginning to show, burst into the railed-off space beyond Ball's table.

Corbin saw what he had been hoping to see when the fiery-eyed "Little Big Boss," as the rank and file called him, blew up volcanically, desiring to know, in language that fairly blistered, why everybody on the Nevada Short Line was supinely lying down on the job; why in Hades a man who called himself a dispatcher didn't know any better than to give one train an order against another without giving the order to the opposing train at one and the same time; and, lastly and still more emphatically, what had been done to avert the impending disaster.

Ball, sweating profusely and still mechanically jiggling his key with half-paralyzed fingers, was trying to explain when Corbin, with his ear to the relay, heard the welcome reply coming through the engine-house instruments:

"Train 12 flagged and held. Operator says his wire must be down. Send order through this wire. Bingham, foreman."

Corbin scribbled the message down as it came, tore it from the pad, and took it to Ball, who read it and passed it quickly up to the coruscating gentleman leaning over the counter railing. There was a tiny gap of silence, a joint sigh of relaxing strains that was almost a sob, and then the fireworks took a fresh start. Up and down beside the counter railing strode the red-faced general manager, gesticulating with a balled fist and calling down crisping anathemas upon the heads of a rank and file that wasn't fit to run a railroad in the deepest and hottest gulch of Tartarus. Mr. Richard Maxwell, first as chief of construction, and later as a fighting superintendent and general manager, had practically created the Nevada Short Line out of nothing in the early days of Far Western railroad strugglings, and its good name was as the apple of his eye.

The new man, who had gone quietly back to his table, looked on and listened as one making mental notes for future reference. He had been told that the general manager could, upon occasion, give cards and spades to the old-time mule skinners of the plains, both as to language and the plying of the long-thonged whip, and this bit of office gossip was getting its confirmation in brittle snappings and cracklings that sizzled and stung and burned.

From generalities the "Little Big Boss" presently got down to particulars. Ignoring Calmaine, who, as superintendent, should have been the medium of any specific disciplining of offenders, the volcanic one ripped out his orders.

"Lanterby, get over to the phone and stop that infernal shop whistle! Ball,

you may take ten days to read up on the Book of Rules and see if you can learn how to send train orders properly. You young man at the second wire"—he didn't know Corbin's name, or if he had known it he had forgotten it—"you come over here and take this train sheet. You seem to be the only man in the outfit with any sense left. Straighten out that snarl at Canby and get things moving again. Then order that night man at Canby, and the other one at Summit, to report here to-morrow on Fourteen, to get what's coming to them. Jump to it lively, now!"

Upon his arrival in Brewster two weeks earlier, Corbin had taken a room in a rather obscure hotel remote from the railroad headquarters, staying on there after he had secured his job in the dispatcher's office as if he wished to efface himself as quietly and effectually as possible in his off hours. Under the system of shifts obtaining on the Short Line, he was off duty at four o'clock in the morning, and his time was his own until seven the following evening.

Since Ball's summary suspension made no difference in the office routine, Corbin turned the train sheet over to Shotwell, the other half-trick dispatcher, at the usual hour, and went to his stopping place in the uptown cross street. At the Red Lion he did not go immediately to his room. Instead, he begged writing materials from the sleepy night clerk and sat down in the warmed and lighted hotel office to compose a letter. It proved to be a rather long communication, as it had to be to cover the ground; and if it had been written out on a proper blank it might have figured as the detailed report of a subordinate to his superior, though the note of familiarity running through it suggested relations with his correspondent which were intimate and friendly as well as official:

According to your instructions I am reporting as fully as I can after having been a fortnight on the ground.

First, I find the conditions exactly as you described them for me before I left Washington; the service totally demoralized, shipments delayed, accidents happening, orders either stupidly or willfully misunderstood, and the business of the road suffering in just proportion. And all this is the more remarkable since, from what I can learn, the Short Line has been a model railroad in all respects up to within a few weeks or months.

As I wired you upon my arrival, I secured a place as a telegraph operator in the headquarters dispatcher's office, and have thus had excellent opportunities for a study of the situation from the inside. I think I can safely remove any doubt in your mind as to the falsity of the report that the management is "gumming things up" for the purpose of discrediting the government control. To all appearances the officials, General Manager Maxwell, Superintendent Calmaine, and their subordinates, are making the most heroic efforts to reëstablish discipline. I have just been given a striking object lesson in this field, and a good chance to study both Maxwell and Calmaine under conditions which would tend to break down any barrier of insincerity on their part.

Here followed the story of the "close call" for Number 12, and its outcome in giving the writer a temporary promotion; after which the letter ran on:

You will understand from this incident how completely and almost criminally irresponsible the pay-roll men have become. The operator at Canby was undoubtedly asleep or absent from his office; and the man at Summit was either drunk or incredibly careless in reporting a train as fifty minutes late when it was only five minutes off time—to say nothing of the dispatcher who accepted the report in the face of the blank denial of the time as shown by his own office clock! But this is a fair example of the way things are going.

As to the cause for this mysterious condition of things: I have made such investigations as time and opportunity have permitted, following your instructions as closely as possible. The general public here is averse to government control, partly, I presume, because there is considerable of the Short Line stock held here in the Timanyoni, and there is a fear that the temporary government control will lead, after the war, to government ownership. Some few of the most outspoken Brewsterites charge the present demoralization to government interference with the management. A larger number maintains that German influences are at work, with the double object of impeding traffic and discrediting the administration.

My investigations, as far as they have gone, lead me to side with this latter view, though as yet I have no definite proof of an enemy plot. There is, however, the usual proportion—usual, at least, in this part of the West—of foreigners, or men of for-

eign extraction, in the railroad rank and file; and the trainmen and others, in talking to me as to a fellow employee, nod and wink, as if something secret were going on which they were forbidden to divulge.

I think this is all I have to report at this time, but I may mention two small discoveries I have made which may or may not curtail my usefulness in Brewster. The first is that a man named Gaffney, whom I knew slightly—and heartily disliked—in the old P. C. & B. service, is here as Mr. Maxwell's chief clerk. I am fairly sure he doesn't remember me, though, and I have kept out of his way as much as possible.

The other discovery was a total and astounding surprise. One evening, just before I went on duty, I strolled over to the Hotel Topaz, a new and most gorgeous tourist caravansary recently built, equipped and operated on the "Ritz" plan. As I was passing through the lobby I met two ladies going in to dinner. One of them was an exceedingly handsome matron of maybe thirty-three or four, and the other was—your private secretary and stenographer, Miss Winnie Stirling.

I was completely knocked out, as you may imagine. Miss Winnie had said something about taking a vacation before I left Washington, but I understood she was going to join her people in Florida. Now I learn that she is spending her leave of absence with Mrs. William Starbuck—the handsome matron aforesaid, and the wife of an ex-cattleman, ex-miner, and retired capitalist—one of Brewster's leading citizens.

As quickly as I could, I got Miss Winnie aside and told her that she mustn't tell her friends anything about me, and she promised not to. But before I could escape, I got a most cordial invitation to visit the Starbucks at their home on the mesa—an invitation which I shall carefully refrain from accepting, much as I'd like to have another chance to meet the Starbucks' guest. It's fierce to be here in the same town with Winnie and not be able to see her; but I'll have to let sleeping dogs lie, I'm afraid. Mrs. Starbuck and Mrs. Maxwell are sisters, and something would be sure to come out. And up to date it is reasonably certain that my identity as a government agent is unsuspected by any one here save Miss Winnie

I believe that is all for this time. You can reach me either by letter or wire care of the Red Lion Inn.

Some one has said that there are, broadly speaking, two principal fields in which a seeker may glean knowledge; the one which he cultivates for himself and which lies well within his own fences, and the much larger acreage which is cultivated for him by others. Corbin was grubbing strictly in his own small field when he wrote that sentence about the security of his identity. If he had remarked the thin, hatchet-faced young man, muffled to the ears in his turned-up overcoat collar, and with a soft hat pulled well down over a pair of shrewd, farseeing eyes, dogging his steps when he sallied out in the just-before-dawn darkness to mail his letter, several things might have happened: For one, this story wouldn't have been written.

But Corbin, thinking chiefly of a duty done and a bed and warm blankets to follow, merely dropped his letter into the first mail box he came to and hurried back to the Red Lion, brushing elbows as he passed, with the slender young fellow who had followed him from the hotel door.

The hatchet-faced one did not turn to continue his apparent pursuit of the man he had kept step with from the door of the Red Lion. Instead, he walked briskly on until he came to the mail box. Now Brewster, forward looking in many respects, was still unmodern enough to retain the old-style, cast-iron mail receptacle, with a flap-covered letter slit in the end. As deftly as if he had been a trained mail robber, the young man slipped a bit of wire, with a small knob of some black substance on the end of it, into the slit. A moment's fishing brought up the last letter—Corbin's—which had been dropped in, the black substance playing the part of the fishhook.

The young man thrust the letter into his pocket and walked to the next corner where there was an electric street light. Here he opened the envelope, the gum of the flap being still damp enough to yield to careful manipulation with a lead pencil. A minute or two sufficed for a rapid reading of Corbin's report, and another for the copying of the patently disguised address, "John W. Jones, Esquire, Willard Hotel, Washington, D. C.," after which the mail thief calmly reënclosed and resealed the letter and walked back to drop it into the box from which it had been extracted.

Four nights later—in two of which he had narrowly escaped, in his new job as split-trick dispatcher, putting two several pairs of trains together on a single track—Corbin, passing through the Red Lion office on his way to his room, found a telegram awaiting him. It was a rather cryptic reply to his report, and it read:

To Frederic G. Corbin.
Red Lion Inn, Brewster.
Hebrews ten-thirty-seven.
Calvin Sprague.

Corbin smiled when he read the three words of the message. "Hebrews" evidently meant the Epistle to the Hebrews, but that didn't get him anywhere. His course in a technical university hadn't included anything remotely resembling a study of the New Testament. Worse still, he had no Testament, and he doubted much if the most microscopic search of the Red Lion Inn would reveal one.

Between four and five o'clock in the morning one doesn't expect to find a bookshop open, even in the most progressive of Western cities. But Corbin was a young man of expedients. He remembered having seen a small church around the second corner from the inn; also he had a hazy notion that he had heard that churches of certain faiths are kept open night and day—or at least are not locked and barred against the untimely worshiper.

Corbin ran upstairs, got his flash light and slipped out. The little church was just where he remembered having seen it, and the door yielded to his turning of the knob. The interior was as dark as Erebus behind its stained-glass windows, but the flash enabled him to find a Bible in one of the pews. At the wire-designated reference he turned the flash light upon the page and read:

"For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

II.

On a morning a week beyond Corbin's early-hour search for a copy of a Bible or a New Testament, two men sat opposite each other at a breakfast table in the resplendent morning room of the new Hotel Gloria, Brewster's latest bid for its share of the "see America first" tourist travel.

One of the breakfasters, the one who was evidently the guest, looked like a prosperous cattleman gone gray; a thin, wiry figure of a man, with the healthy tan of the West to set off a face that was virile and alert in spite of a certain settled gravity in the eyes and about the thin-lipped mouth. The other was a huge bulk of a man apparently in his early forties, who looked like the traditional Southern congressman, and seemed a little inclined to dress the part. He was clean shaven, and his rather boyish face lent itself easily to a good-natured smile as he talked.

"It sure does seem good to put my legs under the same table with you again, Billy," the big man was saying. "It was mighty good of you to scamp your home breakfast and come down here to chew with me."

"I reckon I *had* to come—when you wouldn't come on up to the house like a white man," returned the aggrieved guest. "I can tell you right now, Stella's going to raise particular sand when she hears about it."

The man who had forfeited his race claim chuckled contentedly. "Slipped out of bed without telling Mrs. Starbuck and made a sneak on my telephone call, did you? Sorry, but I'm a family man, myself, and knew better than to let you run a house guest in on the womenfolk without due warning given and receipt acknowledged. But tell me: how is everything going in the Timanyoni?"

"Middling slow, as I reckon it ought to go, in war time. We're doing our best; growing wheat and skinning the country of fighting men. The ranchers tell me they're likely to pay a hundred dollars a month and keep for hands this season, and will be playing in blamed big luck to make a harvest, at that. But how about yourself, Calvin? Still in the government treadmill, I take it?"

The big man's laugh was like the booming of a deep-toned bell.

"I never was in the treadmill so you

could notice it, Billy; unless you call the chemistry job in the department of agriculture years ago a regular thing. I was only a free lance, nibbling a little at the edges, and I gave that up after I began vibrating between Florida in winter and Canada in summer for Mrs. Sprague's health."

Mr. William Starbuck, ex-cowboy, ex-supervisor of forest reserves, ex-gold miner, and now, and for a number of years, a retired capitalist, was the least suspicious of men, or he might have observed that his host's answer was no answer at all to the direct question as to his present employment. That he suspected nothing was apparent when he dropped the inquiry and went on talking about former times and General Manager Maxwell's struggles, first to save the Short Line from being swallowed by the Wall Street sharks, and later to make a model railroad out of it.

"Same old Dick, I suppose," said Sprague, after the talk had turned upon Maxwell. "I can't imagine him changing."

"He is, and he isn't. He is younger than either of us, and he is showing his age a whole lot more. This government smash that has come down the pike is making him lose a raft of perfectly good sleep."

"The government smash?" queried the newcomer. "What is that?"

"Why, I reckon you know as much about it as anybody, if you read the papers. The government took the Short Line in, along with the other trunk lines, and Dick had his orders to go right on managing it, as per usual. But in less than a week the hoodoo dropped on him."

"What kind of a hoodoo?"

"Just plain dry rot, as near as anybody can find out; everybody sweating blood, and nobody able to straighten things out. Dick's got so he gives his orders in words of one syllable, and still the rank and file falls down over 'em as if every third man on the road had paresis."

"You interest me, Billy," said the big man. "It seems quite like old times. This thing isn't pro-German propaganda, is it?"

"I don't know; some—a good many—are saying it is. Others will tell you that it's precisely what might have been expected when the government messed into as big a business as American railroading has come to be. Then, again, there's this talk about government ownership after the war is over: If you could take a straw vote in the Timanyoni to-day it would be a unanimous No! yelled so you could hear it plumb in Washington."

"You certainly do interest me," was the big man's comment. He had finished his breakfast and was clipping the tip of an enormous black cigar. "You've given two possible reasons for the Short Line's slump in discipline: does anybody ever hint that perhaps the Maxwell management is doing a bit of premeditated 'gumming' to forestall this very thing you speak of—government ownership after the war? It would be a neat little trick of camouflage; to get the people who use the road up in arms against any such change."

Starbuck looked worried.

"Yes, you do hear that—once in a while," was the reluctant admission. "But, of course, that's all tomfoolery. You know Dick Maxwell—not as well as I do, but well enough. He's no damn' rascal, Calvin."

"Certainly not. But mightn't there be two sides to the thing—from Maxwell's point of view? He's a salaried man, owing his president and board of directors unqualified loyalty. For years he's given them just that. Now he is confronting a situation which may eventually deprive his owners of their property—with or without just compensation, as the case may be. Isn't it barely possible that he sees, or thinks he sees, a rather cagy way to knock the thing on the head while it is still in the grubworm stage?"

Starbuck shook his head, and the gun-fighter eyes which were his distinguishing feature grew a trifle hard.

"Nothing doing," he said, as if that settled the matter beyond question.

"We still have a few enemy aliens left in this neck o' woods, not many of 'em, but enough to mess things up for Dick or any of us, if they're wised up to work together. But I've got a little theory of my own that doesn't accuse either Dick or the few pro-Germans."

"What is it?"

"It's this: Any sweeping change of policy or management in as big a corporation as the Short Line is liable to start an epidemic of what you might call individual 'don't-care-itis.' I've seen it before, and maybe you have. You may say that there hasn't been any real change of management, but the men don't look at it that way. To them, school's out and the schoolmaster's gone home. I've heard some of 'em talk just like that since the government took hold."

"You don't mean organized labor?"

"Oh, no; just individuals, or little bunches of 'em here and there. That's my theory, and when he isn't too mad to see straight, Maxwell sort of halfway agrees with me."

Sprague did not controvert this opinion; instead, he switched the talk to other things, winding up finally by saying: "I see you have your car: what about 'showing me,' as they say in Missouri? I'm curious to see how much Brewster has grown since I was here last. Afterward, you may take me home with you and I'll apologize to Mrs. Starbuck for having stolen you for breakfast."

It was a fine winter day, crisp, invigorating and not too cold, and Starbuck made the sight-seeing round conscientiously, extending it to take in the Maxwell-Starbuck mine far up among the Topaz foothills. Sprague's interest in everything seemed generously inexhaustible, and when the gray roadster was once more headed townward he looked at his watch as one astounded.

"By Jove, Billy—we've used up the whole forenoon!" he exclaimed. "Mrs. Stella will think you're lost in the shuffle!"

"I'm taking you to the home shack right now," said the retired capitalist, turning the car into a splendid avenue of residences on the high mesa overlooking the business district. And when the "shack" was reached, it proved to be a magnificent mansion built of rough-hewn pink lava stone, occupying half a square, and surrounded by ornamental grounds that would have done credit to the genius of a Long Island landscape artist.

Sprague had a warm welcome from the handsome matron into whom the carefree, outdoor Stella Fairbairn of other days had grown; also from a sweet-faced, clear-eyed young woman guest answering to the name of Miss Winnie Stirling, to whom he took his introduction with a twinkle in his eye.

It was after Mrs. Starbuck had excused herself to give the luncheon order, and his host had gone to the garage to tell his mechanic to change one of the tires on the roadster, that Sprague planted his great body in the biggest and easiest of the drawing-room chairs and invited the young guest to come and sit beside him.

"Well," he began; "you've had three clear weeks. What have you discovered?"

"A lot of things," was the quiet reply. "The Starbucks have taken me everywhere, as you said they would, and I have met and talked with a great many of the best people in Brewster. I'm sorry I can't help out in the way you wished me to. A large majority of the people I have been meeting believe fully that the railroad management is playing a bold game to show how badly the government control is tangling things up, and they rather glory in it—when they are not grumbling and fussing over the delays and other inconveniences. Mr. Maxwell is very popular here. I have met him and I can understand why. He is a splendid little autocrat; just the kind of man you'd pick out for a successful leader of men."

Sprague nodded slowly. "He is that," he said. "I knew him some years ago, and he was a genius in his line even then. I've been hoping your little campaign of 'listening in' would help me to make a fight for him. The

department is getting mighty impatient, and the remedy, as it has been applied in other cases, is to make a clean sweep of the suspected officials."

"I know," returned the young woman, whose normal employment as a war-volunteer private secretary in Sprague's Washington office had given her an opportunity of knowing many things not published in the newspapers. "I've tried to find out all I could, without abusing the Starbucks' hospitality. They are awfully good to me; all because Edward and I happened to be on the same ship with them coming back from France after the war broke. Of course, they fight the idea that Mr. Maxwell is doing anything that he ought not to do. That is natural, since Mrs. Starbuck and Mrs. Maxwell are sisters."

"Quite natural," Sprague agreed. Then: "How about the one particular young man that I wished you to meet?"

A faint flush came to tinge the clear-skin translucency of the young woman's face and neck.

"I have met him," she replied. "In fact, he has called here twice since our introduction. I——"

She stopped abruptly and Sprague smiled.

"Not growing squeamish, are you?" he asked.

She shook her head. "Squeamishness, as you would define it, was left behind in the other century. You forget that I have enlisted for the duration of the war."

"No, I haven't forgotten it. But what is the difficulty?"

The young woman's eyes were veiled. "Fred is here," she said quietly.

"Well?"

"Don't make me tell you a lot of things you have found out for yourself, long ago. The young man we were speaking of wanted to take me driving in his car. That would have been my best chance to find out what you wished me to find out."

"And you were afraid Fred Corbin might see you?"

The young woman left her chair and walked to one of the windows, standing there for a moment like a man, with her hands behind her. When she came back she proved her right to be called of her own generation.

"It's no use, Cousin Calvin," she said. "I'm quite sure we haven't fooled you for a moment—Fred and I. But there is a rift in the lute; a—an obstacle."

"Has it a name?"

"A very terrifying name; it is the war. The time calls for the best that any or all of us can do, and I refuse to unfit myself for the little I can do by marrying."

"Good little girl!" Sprague applauded. "But at the same time you don't wish to drive Fred to drink by letting him see you out motor car-ing with another man. Never mind. That little scheme of mine was only a sort of forlorn hope, and I didn't guess that I was killing it in advance by sending Fred out here. Then you haven't learned anything?"

"Only that the young man in question is inordinately ambitious, that he has good connections in New York, and that he was at one time private secretary to Mr.—to the person 'named in the indictment;' I believe that was the way you said it."

"And a parlor socialist?"

"Yes; I suppose you might call him that, at least in the sense that he would use socialism, or any other movement, as a ladder to climb by. He is a curious mixture; I have never met any one quite like him before. One minute he gives you the impression of being as secretive as the villain in a play, and at the next he is curiously talkative and boastful. The second time we were together he told me he had once been a tramp—a hobo—just for the experience, you know."

Sprague laughed. "Drawing the long bow for the benefit of a pretty young woman?" he suggested.

"Perhaps; I couldn't say as to that. But he showed me a card with his name on it which he said would admit him to any gathering of hobos, anywhere in this country or Canada."

Sprague nodded, and here the talk

was broken off by Mrs. Starbuck's return to say that luncheon was served. Sprague went to make the fourth at table, and after the meal, smoke a number of his prodigious cigars with Starbuck in the ex-mine owner's den; spoiled the entire afternoon, it might be said, talking over his former visits to Brewster and demeaning himself in all ways as a man with nothing to do, and with less than nothing on his mind to interfere with his enjoyment of a quiet winter afternoon with a friend. And when he left, late in the day, to go back to the hotel, it was with a half promise, extorted by Mrs. Starbuck's urgings, to remove presently from his quarters in the Hotel Gloria, and to take up his residence, as an old friend should, under the hospitable roof of the Mesa Avenue mansion.

III.

On the day following the receipt of the three-word message from his superior in Washington, Corbin found himself shifted from the night split trick in the dispatcher's office to a day relief, with his hours beginning at eleven in the forenoon and ending at seven at night. For this cause it was not until the evening of the day marking Mr. Calvin Sprague's as yet unannounced arrival in Brewster that he found a note in his key box at the Red Lion. It was the expected summons from the "big chief," asking him to come to Suite 713 in the Hotel Gloria at eight o'clock, if that hour were convenient.

Since there was, by this time, another important discovery to report, Corbin hurried through his supper and started out to keep the appointment at the downtown hotel. It was at the final street crossing, less than a block from his destination, that he got in the way of the thunderbolt. He had just stepped down from the curb when he first saw the brown road car. It was coming from the direction of the railroad headquarters, and there was only one person in it. The wind shield was up, and the glare of the street electrics on the glass kept him from seeing clearly; yet he had a brief glimpse of the man behind the steering wheel—a man buttoned to the chin in a thick driving coat and with a soft hat pulled well over his face.

He was not permitted a second glance. At the corner, and without a warning signal of any kind, the car was made to swerve suddenly from its proper side of the roadway to come charging down upon him. Corbin tried to spring aside, was a half second too late, and the last he remembered was the crash and tinkle of broken glass. When he began to realize things again he found himself propped in a chair in a corner drug store, with a doctor bandaging his head, and a throng of morbidly curious onlookers pushing and crowding to get a sight of him.

Taking the doctor's word for it that the wound was not serious, Corbin paid his fee and got away as quickly as he could, bluffing a newspaper reporter who was trying to get the accident story out of him. Reaching the Gloria, he had himself taken to the seventh floor, tapped at the door of Sprague's sitting room, and was admitted.

"Sorry if I'm late," he began, "but there was a little accident, and the doctor——" He took off his hat and let the head bandage speak for itself.

"My dear boy—don't mention it!" said the big man, helping his visitor out of his overcoat. "Somebody's auto run you down?"

The younger man dropped into a chair. "How did you guess that?" he asked.

Sprague held up the overcoat and pointed to a mud mark on the skirt. It was the plain print of an auto tire.

"Laugh, and call it a straight steal from Sherlock Holmes, if you like," he chuckled. "But the fact remains that one does grow a bit more observant of the little things as one grows older. How bad is the hurt?"

"It's of no consequence—only a scalp cut. But I had to have it disinfected and tied up."

"Of course you did. Whose auto was it?"

"That is something that I'd give a month's pay to know. The beggar didn't even stop to look back, so they told me in the drug store where I was patched up. Besides, he went out of his way to get me; turned the corner on the wrong side of the street and ran me down as if he meant to."

"And you didn't get his number?"

"I didn't have time. The first thing I knew I didn't know anything—I was down and out. Just as I went down, I saw that it was a brown-colored car—a roadster—with one man in it. I couldn't make him out very well behind the wind shield." Corbin had picked up the overcoat and was about to brush the mud mark off, but Sprague shot out an arm and stopped him.

"I shouldn't do that, if I were you," he said quietly. "Not while it seems to be the only clew you are likely to have to the identity of the man who tried to kill you."

"That tread mark?" said Corbin incredulously. "There are probably hundreds of auto tires in Brewster that could duplicate it."

"Quite likely," was the calm rejoinder. "Just the same, and before we get too deeply interested in other things, we'll make a record of this—on the chance that it may be needed, later on. It can't do any harm, you know."

There were two stout traveling trunks in the sitting room, and out of one of them Sprague took an apparatus that looked like a miniature and modified movie camera. With this and a special electric lamp, cord-connected to a chandelier socket, he photographed the tire print.

"I'll develop the film for you a little later," he said, returning the camera to its storage. "Now we can go on to the railroad affair. Anything new since you wrote me?"

"There is, for a fact!" said Corbin. "I should have wired you if I hadn't known you were on your way out here. I believe I have a line now on the whole crooked plot."

"Well! that sounds good," said the big man genially. "See what it means to be young and enthusiastic and right on the job! Have you gone far enough to let a right old and decrepit person like me have a look-in?"

Corbin's head was still buzzing from the effect of the auto knock-out, and he had to partly close one eye to be able to see the figure of the "big chief" lying back comfortably in the room's easiest chair. Though he had been Sprague's protégé and eager understudy since the time when the big man had helped him through college, there were moments, like the present, when he could never be sure that his great file leader wasn't laughing at him.

"Yes, I think I've gone far enough to be able to make good," he asserted. "Since I landed in Brewster I've been cultivating all sorts and conditions of people, as you told me to; trainmen, shopmen, telegraph operators, clerks, outsiders—anybody who would talk. Particularly, I have tried to get in touch with the foreign-born contingent. For a time I thought the trouble was originating with Germans or German sympathizers, as I wrote you."

"But now you have changed your mind?"

"I have. It's a case of Bolshevism, pure and simple."

"Dear me!" said Sprague, with his calm, large-featured face a perfect mask of dismay, "have we got to fight that, too?"

"That's the name of it," Corbin returned confidently. "It's like this: shortly after I got settled in the Red Lion, I fell in with the man who has the room opposite mine. At first I thought he was one of the railroad clerks, but he turned out to be the editor—the whole staff, in fact—of a little two-by-four labor paper which has its circulation chiefly among the railroad operatives. Stevens—that is his name—is a young fellow of parts; good education, of good family, I should say, and a smooth talker."

"Exactly the qualifications for a villain in disguise," put in the listener with subdued enthusiasm. "Naturally, you 'cultivated' this Mr. Stevens at once?"

Corbin grinned. "It was the other way round. He did the cultivating

himself, dropping into my room at all sorts of odd times, smoking my tobacco, and getting himself on a 'chummy' footing. It wasn't long before I discovered that he was 'feeling me out' for proselyting purposes. Day before yesterday he took me into his confidence. His little one-horse paper, *The Free Man,* is a camouflaged organ of the anarchists, and Stevens himself is the leader of a group recruited among the railroad men; a group small but powerful, was the way he put it. He wanted me to join."

"Good—excellently good! And the object of this society?"

"Is a general upset of the present order of things, with Russia's example as a pattern to work by. Stevens argues eloquently that the laboring man's opportunity is ripe—with the war on and everything in a state of flux. Of course, I stood him off on the joining proposition; told him I'd like to think it over for a day or so. He swore me to secrecy—or thought he did—and let it go at that."

"And you think this young man and his 'group' are responsible for the uproarious conditions on the Nevada Short Line?"

"I am practically certain of it. He as good as admitted it."

"Well, now; that simplifies matters immensely, doesn't it? What is your next step?"

"I've worked it out pretty well," said the understudy, with pardonable pride. "The first thing was to get evidence, and I procured a file of *The Free Man* and went through it. There is anarchistic stuff enough in the paper to make its editor liable under the espionage act. I thought I wouldn't make any arrests until you came."

"That was judicious—handsomely judicious. Was it Davy Crockett who said, 'first be sure you're right and then go ahead?' Not that there can be any possible doubt, of course, after the pains you've taken to verify things. But now let us go back to your late accident for a moment: have we, or have we not, found the motive and the man?"

Corbin sat up and stared, with both eyes, this time.

"You mean that Stevens——"

"One question, first; does this young man own a car?"

"He does."

"And would it answer the description of the one that ran you down?"

"Why—generally speaking, yes; it's an old, secondhand roadster. But——"

"One moment more," the big man slipped in smoothly. "Here is the way the horrible suspicion shapes itself up: suppose, after having made his proposal to you, this young anarchist discovers in some way that you are not the harmless telegraph operator he has been taking you for. Isn't it an article in the anarchistic creed not to let a human life—or any number of them—stand in the way to block the wheels of Bolshevikan progress? And what safer way is there to kill your enemy nowadays than to run him down with an auto?"

What Corbin would have said in response to this was lost between the brain and the lip. There was a tap at the door and Sprague answered it. The tapper was a newsboy, ragged, dirty and scarcely more than an infant in size, if not in years. Out of the empty paper sack he fished a man's soft felt hat, crumpled and soiled, and thrust it at Corbin.

"What's this?" Corbin asked.

"It's de hat frum de bloke what runned over yous," grinned the infant. "It blows off when he makes his git-away, an' he ain't stoppin' to pick it up. I t'ought maybe yous'd like to have it f'r a souv'nir."

"How did you know where to find me?"

The boy shut one eye tight and winked rapidly with the other.

"Aw, what's eatin' yous, mister! I ain't blind out o' both me eyes at de same time. I got friends in dis boardin' house an' I seed where you come to."

Corbin found a silver dollar and gave it to the boy.

"Is that enough?" he asked.

"Watch me." He spun the coin in

the air, caught it deftly and darted toward the door; but Corbin called him back.

"Hold on a minute, son. What's your name?"

"Tony Raffaeli."

"Did you see the man run over me?"

"Yep."

"What was the number of the car?"

"I ain't watchin' out f'r dat."

"All right. Where can I find you if I want you again?"

"*Evenin' Tribune*—any time what dey's printin'."

After the boy had gone, Sprague took the hat, knocked it into shape and regarded it thoughtfully.

"Does our anarchistic friend wear a hat like this?" he asked.

Corbin nodded. "Sometimes; though I've seen him oftener in a workman's cap."

"Good. With this and the tire print, you ought to be able to identify your would-be assassin. If you could catch him asleep some time and make a plaster cast of his head so that we could tell if the hat fits him——"

"Now I know you're laughing at me," said Corbin, a bit crestfallen.

"I am. You've had enough for one night, and what you need is to take that broken head to bed for a good, sound sleep. Forget the Red Lion for tonight and go on through my bedroom to the third room in the suite and you'll find everything you need; a private bath, clean pajamas in the wardrobe, and some sleeping powders of my own invention on the dressing case. Take one of them before you go to bed, and sleep the clock around if you can. I'll see to it that the railroad people know why you are taking a lay-off."

IV.

When Frederic Corbin awoke from the soundest sleep he ever remembered falling into and looked at his watch, he was astounded to find that it was three o'clock in the afternoon of another day.

Dressing quickly, he found the other rooms of the suite empty, but on the table in the sitting room there was a note pinned to a photographic print of the tire mark. "Back this evening," the note said. "Make yourself entirely at home."

But Corbin had no notion of losing any more time. A hasty snack in the grillroom, a visit to a doctor to get the bandage removed and a few bits of adhesive plaster substituted for it, and he was ready to go on the warpath.

His first step was to find an optical shop where he could borrow a magnifying glass. A careful scrutiny of the photograph enabled him to recognize the auto tire as one sold under the trade name of "Arbo," and distinguishable from other brands by a peculiar arrangement of the triangular tread grips. Further examination revealed the fact that the tire which had made the mark on his coat had lost at least one of these knobs or grips.

Next he sought the agency for the Arbo tires, and was shown, among many other names in the sales list, that of "William C. Stevens." Another guarded inquiry gave him the address of the public garage where Stevens kept his car, and a few minutes later he had found the place, and the car, which—so the garage keeper said—had come in late the previous night and had not been taken out since.

Corbin held the garage keeper in talk until an impatient customer called the man off. Then he made the identifying examination. The car was not brown, as he had fancied it was; it was a mud-colored mauve, much the worse for wear and neglect. But the other details fitted precisely. The tires were Arbos and the right-hand, forward-wheel shoe had several of the triangular tread knobs missing. More convincing still, the right-hand headlight was bent a trifle out of line and its glass had been recently smashed, the newness of the smash seemingly proving itself by the fact that some splinters of the glass still remained in the reflector. Corbin recalled the crash and tinkle of broken glass which was the last thing he remembered as he went down.

From this point the course seemed reasonably clear. Going over to the Red Lion, Corbin took his place at one of the supper tables and ate leisurely through the meal. Stevens did not show up in the dining room, but he was often irregular. When it became apparent that his man was not going to appear until later, Corbin went up to his room and sat in the dark behind the partly closed door. There was a service automatic in his grip in the closet, but he did not get it out. Stevens was a slightly built young fellow and didn't look as if he could put up much of a fight. And Corbin himself tipped the scale at one hundred and sixty-eight, stripped.

A long hour went by before the expected footstep on the stair broke the third-floor silence. Corbin sprang up and stood in readiness, but waited until he heard the rattle of a key in the opposite door. Then he called out.

"Is that you, Stevens? Come over here a minute."

Quite without hesitation the key rattler walked across the hall and entered the darkened room. Corbin shut the door and snapped on the light. The sudden glow revealed a rather good-looking young fellow, thin and a bit hollow-chested, but with a face and eyes that mirrored clean-cut alertness and the resolute hardihood of the rebellious idealist.

Corbin kicked out a chair. "Sit down," he said; "I want to talk to you." And before the other could reply: "What was your object in trying to kill me last night?"

Stevens drew the chair forward and sat down astride of it, and his reply was neither an admission nor a denial.

"You damned well need killing, Corbin, and you know it," he said quite coolly.

"Why?"

"Because you are a spy. I got onto you pretty early in the game, and if you had consented to go to one meeting of the bunch with me, would never have come back alive."

"Then I don't need to tell you that you are under arrest."

"Not at all. I've been looking for it every day."

"You don't deny that you ran me down with your auto last night?"

"I neither deny nor affirm. It's up to you to make charges and prove them—if you can. When it comes to the show-down, it will be your word against mine—with a jury, mind you, to decide."

Corbin smiled. "It's not quite that simple, Stevens. I have a file of your paper."

"I know it—knew when you stole it. It's a labor paper, and the minute you say that, you've lost your case with any jury that can be impaneled in Brewster." He found a cigarette, lighted it and inhaled deeply. "You're new to the game, Corbin," he went on, calmly. "If you hadn't been, you would have seen that you played to lose, either way around. If you had tried to pull the rough stuff on the bunch, you wouldn't have lived to get away with it; and if you make an example of me—well, you know the old saying, 'the blood of the martyr is the seed of the church.'"

Corbin shook his head.

"It's a mistake to underestimate your antagonist, Stevens. Suppose we don't say anything about the trouble you've been stirring up on the railroad: suppose I make it a charge of attempted murder—for last night's job. I have evidence—evidence that will convince any fair-minded jury."

"But unless you drag the other thing in, you couldn't show any motive."

"Let the motive go. Criminal carelessness, properly handled, might serve to send you to jail for a while."

The man who was getting a mild third degree took another deep inhalation from his cigarette.

"I'm no infant, Corbin; you're trying to bargain with me. Shoot it out in plain English."

"All right: Give me the names of the men who are with you in this scheme to demoralize the railroad service, and I'll agree to drop the automobile incident."

Stevens stood up, dropped the ciga-

rette butt and stepped on it, and began to button his overcoat.

"Nothing to it," he said carelessly. Then: "I suppose you'll want to lock me up. Come on; we may as well have it over with."

Corbin put his prisoner in a taxi, drove with him to the residence of the Federal judge, secured his commitment on a charge of conspiracy, and then saw him safely behind the bars in the county jail. After which, with the consciousness of a good job fairly begun, he had himself driven to the Hotel Gloria.

As on the previous evening, Sprague was reclining luxuriously in the sitting room's biggest chair when he listened to Corbin's report.

"Didn't lose a minute, did you, son? —pinched him while the pinching was good," he chuckled genially. Then, with an abruptness that was almost startling: "How well does Mr. Richard Maxwell know you, Fred?"

"Why—I don't know. Quite likely he doesn't know me at all. He has been in the dispatcher's office only half a dozen times, maybe, since I went to work there."

Sprague opened a drawer in the table and took out a pair of colored spectacles with heavy tortoise-shell bows and ear hooks. "Put them on," he said, and when Corbin obeyed: "I guess that will do; they make you look at least ten years older. Now we'll go out and make a little evening call."

Thoroughly mystified, but too well trained to ask questions, Corbin helped the big man into his overcoat, and a few minutes later they had taken a cab and were being whirled away toward the railroad headquarters. When they got out of the taxi at the station cab rank, Sprague called Corbin's attention to a smart brown roadster headed in toward the platform.

"Nice little car," he remarked. "Ever seen it before?"

Corbin lifted the colored spectacles so that he could see better. There was a pendant arc light over the platform. In one and the same glance he saw that the roadster was shod with Arbo tires, and that the glass in the right-hand headlight was missing.

"By Jove!" he gasped; then: "Whose car is it?"

"It belongs to Mr. Richard Maxwell."

"Great Scott! Have I——"

The big man linked an arm in Corbin's and drew him away. "You have done precisely what I wished you to do. Let's go upstairs and call on Mr. Maxwell. He is in his office and is expecting us. You will be introduced by your middle name, Grantham, and as one of my young men. Your part will be to sit still and listen—and learn. But first there must be a bit of play acting. Put those colored glasses in your pocket and go up ahead of me to the dispatcher's office. Go in as if you had come back to help out on the night shift, strip to your shirt sleeves, and sit down at one of the telegraph-tables—sit so that the light will fall upon you, but not upon your face. Stay there until somebody comes in to ask if Number 12 is on time. All clear, so far?"

"Yes," said Corbin, entirely without prejudice to the fact that he was utterly bewildered.

"All right. After the man who asks about Number 12 has got his answer and gone, you can make your broken head an excuse, and tell the dispatcher that you guess you'll have to knock off —that you're not as fit as you thought you were. You'll find me waiting for you in the corridor."

Corbin carried his instructions out to the letter, varying the program only by answering a rapid fire of questions from Juniman and Lanterby about the auto accident. Muller, the split-trick night man, was short-handed, and he welcomed Corbin cheerfully. Stripping his overcoat and coat, Corbin took hi old place at the second train wire, ad justing the hanging incandescent as Sprague had suggested.

In a minute or two the corridor door opened and some one came up to the railing opposite Muller's train desk. Corbin did not look up, but he did not need to. The incomer was asking about

the time of Train 12, and the voice identified him for Corbin as Gaffney, Mr. Maxwell's chief clerk. Again Corbin followed instructions. Waiting a few minutes after Gaffney had gone out, he offered his excuse and made his escape to the corridor. His chief was waiting for him, and there was another whispered order.

"Put the glasses on and button your overcoat as if you had just come into the building; then walk at my left as we go in."

Completely mystified by this time, Corbin obeyed blindly. The general manager's offices were at the west end of the corridor, and there were three rooms; an outer waiting room, a middle room with the desks of the chief clerk and the two stenographers, and Mr. Maxwell's private office. The first room of the suite was empty, the second held only the chief clerk, Gaffney, who was busy at his desk, which was at the right as they entered.

"An appointment with Mr. Maxwell," said Sprague, and the chief clerk nodded toward the open door on the opposite side of the room. A moment later Corbin found himself shaking hands with the fiery-faced little autocrat of the Nevada Short Line as Sprague introduced him.

"This is Grantham—the young man I was speaking of this morning," was the form the introduction took. "Being small and inoffensive, myself, I carry him around with me as a sort of bodyguard."

The general manager laughed at the big man's little joke and invited his callers to be seated. "Any friend of yours is a friend of mine, Calvin," he said. And then; "I hope you are bringing me some good news."

Sprague placed his chair where he could be both seen and heard from the room beyond, thereby increasing Corbin's inner bewilderment.

"The best of news. Perhaps it isn't putting it too strongly to say that your troubles are as good as cured. As I told you this morning, the department has been doing a bit of quiet investigating—entirely without your knowledge and consent, of course—and one of our men diagnosed the case at once. You have a group of anarchists on your pay roll, small, but quite large enough to account for all the demoralization, and the ringleader is at the present moment safely in jail." And from that he went on smoothly to tell of Steven's self-betrayal and his arrest, suppressing nothing but Corbin's name.

Corbin sat back and listened as one dumfounded. That his chief should make common talk of the entire plan of campaign—for that was what it amounted to with the chief clerk listening in the other room—seemed to promise the most certain defeat of the plan. With the warning spread abroad, the rank-and-file conspirators could never be apprehended. Still Sprague went on, talking easily and with the utmost freedom, winding up finally with warm congratulations for the general manager.

"Now that it is all over, Maxwell, I don't mind telling you that there were ugly rumors flying around about you and your management in Washington. It is known that you and your friends have stock in the Short Line, and in the past you've always been an outspoken opponent of government ownership of the railroads. There were those who charged openly that you were personally responsible for the 'gumming up;' that you had quietly passed the word down the line to let things go to pot for a while. Consequently, I'm mighty glad we've located the sore where it can't touch you. I guess that's all for this evening. We're keeping you from your work. Drop by the hotel and see me to-morrow, if you have time."

It was in this fashion that the interview ended; but there was yet one more surprise in store for Corbin, to be sprung as they were passing together through the outer waiting room. In one corner of the room stood a clothes tree, with two overcoats and two hats hanging from its branches. One of the hats was a derby of sober middle age; the other was a soft felt hat. Without breaking his stride, Sprague swept the

soft hat from its hook and concealed it under his coat.

"You've got me going, good and hard," Corbin managed to say as they were descending the stair. "It's all Greek to me; from giving the whole snap away in Mr. Maxwell's office to stealing Gaffney's hat. Where do we go from here?"

"Wait," said the big man, "and you'll see."

At the cab rank Sprague took a taxi, giving the driver an address that was strange to Corbin. The stop was made in a part of the city that he was not familiar with, before a two-story building with no lights. Dismissing the taxi, Sprague took a key from his pocket and opened a side door in the building. It was pitch dark in the narrow hall in which Corbin found himself, but the smell of the place was unmistakable.

"A drug store?" he asked.

"The compounding laboratory of one of the downtown drug stores," Sprague explained. "The proprietor is a friend of Billy Starbuck's, and he was good enough to lend me the key when I asked for it."

Up a narrow stair they felt their way, and on the second story came into the laboratory proper, a chemist's workroom fitted with all the stills, retorts, test tubes and other paraphernalia of the occult science, all of these displaying themselves in the admirable order of disorder when Sprague turned the light on.

Sprague stripped his coat and turned up the cuffs of his soft shirt.

"Now you can sit down and take a little nap, if you want to," he said. "I have some work to do," and he began it by tearing the sweatband out of the hat he had taken from the general manager's waiting room.

Fathoms out of his depth, Corbin sat back and watched a process which appeared to have neither rhyme nor reason. First, Sprague cut the sweatband into infinitesimal squares. These were warmed in a retort and then cooked gently for a few minutes in some colorless liquid over a gas flame. From that point on, the process became more intricate, and the understudy lost track of the various steps until the result reached the final stage—the decanting of a few thimblefuls of an amber liquor into a small test tube.

"Now for the demonstration," said the big-bodied experimenter. "For many years, investigators in the criminal field have been more helpless than a common hound dog. Let the dog smell some article of clothing that has been worn by the criminal, and he will at once track and identify the owner. Human intelligence took a forward step when the Bertillon system and the thumb-print record were adopted. But what if your criminal had never been Bertilloned? How was he to be identified in that case?

"It was something over a year ago that I set out to try to find some way in which an intelligent human being could equal the dog. We had discovered that no two persons had the same thumb print. Was there any other characteristic common to all people, but yet which varied in all? There was and is; and the name of it is *sweat*—just plain perspiration. Give me any two articles of clothing that have been worn next to the skin, and I can prove conclusively by a chemical test whether they have been worn by the same or two different persons."

Corbin shook his head. "I'm in a condition to believe anything you tell me," he said.

"But not without proof—never without proof," cautioned the master. From under a bell glass he took two small vials numbered "1" and "2," each containing a yellowish liquor of exactly the same tint as that in the test tube. "Here is the proof," he went on. "While you were asleep this forenoon I burglarized Stevens' room at the Red Lion and stole one of his hats. Number One contains a solution made from the sweatband. Number Two was made from the hat the little newsboy brought you last night—the hat that your auto assassin lost in making his get-away. This test tube we will call Number Three, and you have just seen its con-

tents made from the sweatband of Gaffney's hat.

"Now for the test. I add one drop of this acid to Number One and you see what it does"—holding the vial up to the light—"turns the solution a bright green. So we may safely say that William Stevens' characteristic is green. Next we will take the test tube —Gaffney's sample."

Corbin was on his feet now and staring as one stares at a miracle wrought before his eyes. As the acid dropped into the test tube the yellow liquid turned to a dull red.

"So far, so good," said the experimenter. "We see now that the perspiratory characteristics of these two men are widely different. Now we will try Number Two. If your theory is correct—that it was Stevens who ran you down—Number Two should react like Number One—green. But you see it doesn't; it matches the Gaffney sample so accurately that if the two solutions were in similar vials you couldn't tell them apart!"

"But Gaffney!" Corbin gasped; "why should he steal Mr. Maxwell's car and try to kill me with it?"

Sprague laughed jovially. "Again I shall have to ask you to wait a little while, Frederic, my son. In the meantime you can be cultivating that most priceless gift of the Creator to man—your reasoning power. You haven't been using that very much in the past three weeks, or you wouldn't have gone so far astray."

Decanting the test-tube liquor into a vial and numbering it "3," he placed the three little bottles carefully in a small pocket case, saying: "If you will find your way to the stair before I turn out the light——"

Corbin was silent on the way back to the Hotel Gloria. There were many things to think of, and the thoughts were most of them keenly humiliating. As an understudy, in the first investigation in which he had been given a free hand, he had proved a sorry failure. As they were turning the final corner, he said: "It struck me at the time that Stevens gave up too easily. What he will do to me for the false imprisonment will probably be good and plenty."

"I shouldn't borrow any trouble about that," was the quiet reply. "The department of justice has been keeping an eye on him for some time on account of the anarchistic tendencies of his paper."

"But are you sure that he and his bunch of Bolsheviki are not responsible for the condition of things on the Short Line?"

"Quite sure," said Sprague; but beyond the simple assertion he did not go.

When they reached Sprague's suite on the seventh floor of the great hotel, Corbin had another shock of surprise. The rooms were lighted, and occupied. Sitting at the table and working diligently with a long cipher telegram and a secret code book was a clear-eyed young woman—otherwise Miss Winifred Stirling, Sprague's war-volunteer private secretary—who looked up and nodded brightly as they entered.

"It has come," she said, without waiting for Sprague's question. "I have it nearly translated."

"Is it conclusive?" asked the big man, with the slightest possible shade of anxiety in his tone.

"Entirely so."

Sprague planted himself in his own particular easy-chair with a sigh of relief and clipped and lighted one of his enormous black cigars. In a few moments the young woman turned to read aloud the translation of the cipher telegram. It had been filed for sending within the hour, was addressed to the senior member of a well-known New York brokerage house of rather questionable standing, and it was signed "Gaffney."

Danger over. Corbin, government man, has his chief here. They have both gone off on false trail. Have arrested man named Stevens, editor of small labor paper, on charge of conspiracy to disorganize railroad service in interest of socialist propaganda, and will make charge stick. Maxwell suspects nothing as yet. Have had no difficulty in gumming campaign. It is done by word of mouth, as you suggested, and

coming from me, rank and file take it as coming from headquarters. Men are intensely loyal to Maxwell, and I had only to hint that they would be doing him service if they fell down on their jobs. Let me know when stock has been sufficiently depressed. Can't be entirely easy here with Calvin Sprague on the ground.

Sprague's mellow laugh punctuated the close of the reading. "That last sentence is the sincerest compliment I have had in many a day," he chuckled. "He 'can't be entirely easy!' He'll be much less easy after we've given Mr. Richard Maxwell a copy of this telegram, I fancy."

"I'm down and out," said Corbin shamefacedly. "But if you don't mind, I'd like to know how and where I first flew the track."

"Do you want me to tell it right out —before Winnie, here?" the big man asked quizzically.

"You may as well. You can't make it sound any worse than it really is."

"All right. You got off first by not taking the broad view—the lookout over the top of things. You saw only the material tangle here on the railroad; and what you ought to have seen is the fact that the war, and the taking over of the control of the roads by the government, would set a lot of crooked minds at work to see how money could be made out of it. Do you get that?"

"I get it now; yes."

"Good. Then you got off again when you shoved your reason into the background and began to have 'theories,' like the garden vegetable, or policeman, variety of detective. Before you left Washington, as you may remember, I dropped a hint to the effect that Mr. Maxwell had just hired a new chief clerk. Did you look this new man's record up? Evidently you did not; not even after you had discovered that he was Gaffney, whom you knew had once been the private secretary to this New York broker of shady repute."

"You suspected Gaffney?"

"No, I didn't suspect him; I *knew* he was the guilty man, after I had found out that his former employer was engineering a move to 'bear' Short Line stock on the market—a thing which you might have learned as easily as I did. The problem was to catch Gaffney in the act. There was only one sure and quick way to convict him and clear Maxwell: that was through a voluntary confession on Gaffney's part. How to induce him to make that confession was the question; and it was answered when you dragged in your theory about Stevens and his anarchists."

"How did that answer it?"

"Easily. I knew you'd pounce upon Stevens and arrest and jail him, if I didn't tell you not to; so I made my arrangements accordingly—told Maxwell just enough to get him interested, and to promise to do unquestioningly what I should tell him to do. Under that promise I got him to go to his office this evening, and to make sure that Gaffney should be there. You said Gaffney had seen you from time to time in the dispatcher's office; I wanted him to see you there again—to satisfy himself that you were there at that particular time. So, when you went in and pretended to go to work, I called Maxwell on his private wire and asked him to send Gaffney in to inquire how Number 12 was. That was merely to keep him from suspecting you as we went together through his room to Mr. Maxwell's."

"Of course!" said Corbin in keen self-abasement. "I might have begun to catch on, right there, but I didn't; I was merely befogged and puzzled."

"After we met Maxwell, I thought you would see my object at once," Sprague went on. "I was telling Gaffney as plainly as possible that his scheme was still safe; that a scapegoat had been found in the person of one Stevens. And just there was where the psychological factor came in. Knowing something of human nature, I reasoned that Gaffney, in the exuberance of his relief, would be morally certain to wire his employer at once that the danger—which I knew he was apprehending—had blown over. I was so well assured in advance that he would do this that I made all arrange-

ments for intercepting the message at any office where it might be filed, and asked Miss Winnie to come down here with her secret code book to be prepared to translate it."

"You say you knew Gaffney was apprehending danger? May I ask how you knew it?"

The big man smiled. "Another of the little things. When I received your letter, your first report, I saw that it had been opened and resealed. The marks of the pencil point which had been used in breaking the seal were plainly visible on the inside of the envelope. Naturally, my reason told me that Gaffney was the opener, since he was the only man on the ground who had reason to fear you in your proper character as a government agent."

"But how could he know I was a government man?"

"That fact might be safely discounted. The New York financial group for which he is working has long arms, sharp ears, and telescopic eyesight. Not much goes on in any quarter of the globe where they are interested without their knowing it. Frankly, my dear boy, that was why I sent you on ahead. It turned out just as I hoped it would. You started a false trail; Gaffney knew you had started it; therefore it was perfectly safe for me to come on and spring the trap."

"And the perspiration byplay," Corbin put in ruefully; "was that camouflage, too?"

"Oh, dear, no!" exclaimed the chemist-inventor, as one suddenly anxious for the good name of his favorite child. "That is the realest thing that ever was! I had learned that Gaffney was out last evening in Mr. Maxwell's roadster; Maxwell sent him uptown to get some papers from a lawyer's office. I have no idea he set out with any notion of finding and killing you; he merely saw you crossing the street and yielded to a sudden desire to get you out of the way—off the map. So I suspected him, and spoiled a couple of perfectly good hats turning the suspicion into a certainty. I had stolen Stevens' hat earlier in the day and made the test on it merely to convince you that he *wasn't* your would-be assassin."

For some little time Corbin sat in his chair by the window, glooming down at the lights in the street far below. At the end of it he got up to go and stand before the young woman sitting at the writing table.

"You were altogether right in standing me off, Winnie," he said. "And you needn't have used the war as an excuse. The real obstacle—your father's money and my—the fact that I shouldn't have had even an education if it hadn't been for your good cousin, here—still looms as big as ever. I thought I had a knack for this secret-service thing, but I haven't; I'm nothing but a dub—a failure."

Instantly the big man sprang up and put his hands on Corbin's shoulders.

"Nothing like that, Frederic, my boy!" he boomed genially. "If you take that tack, you'll make me out as the fellow who has been 'gumming things up.' Cheer up: the worst is yet to come. This little side issue of Maxwell's is only the curtain raiser. The big thing, the thing that brought me out here, is due to ring up about the first of the month, and then you shall have a part to play that will try you out for fair. Winnie, you tell him he's got to stick; give him his orders right now, while I go telephone Maxwell to call in his policeman to attend to Mr. Gaffney. Then we'll both take you home to the Starbucks' and call it the end of a perfect day."

More good stories coming by Lynde; also a novelette by H. de Vere Stacpoole is on the way. Both of these men give the POPULAR their best work.

Psychology and Punches

By Raymond J. Brown

Author of "A Moving Moving Picture," Etc.

Another first-class story of training-camp life, in which Lieutenant Brice demonstrates his peculiar but effective methods of handling soldiers in the raw. Watch this canny officer. He is truly a wiz when it comes to molding men

PETE SIMMONS, corporal of the third squad, Company M, 613th Infantry—red-headed, freckle-faced and half as big as a house—leaped out of his bunk. Simmons was startled; there could be no doubt about that. Only something like the explosion of a bombshell at his feet could get that bulky soldier out of the comfortable sprawl into which he fell automatically as soon as mess was over each evening.

"What's that?" he demanded, glaring around the squad room.

"I said can the bum comedy," repeated the unfamiliar voice he had heard before. "You guys is about as funny as an epidemic!"

Slowly Simmons turned to regard a thin, round-shouldered youth with a pasty, unwholesome look on his narrow, rat face. His painfully new uniform, which fitted him about as well as honors from the imperial German government would fit General Foch, stamped him as a recruit—one of the batch which had been thrust upon Camp Richards that afternoon. He was leaning lazily against a double-deck bunk, puffing at a cigarette, and his little pinched face wore a smirk that seemed to say, "Well, here I am—the little life of the party! Do your tricks—hurry up; and give me a chance to show you some real stuff!"

For a second Simmons' face moved in silence. This recruit seemed more at home in Company M's barracks than Simmons did himself.

"Who're you?" he finally demanded.

The recruit seemed not at all awed. He took a lazy puff of his cigarette, looked Simmons over with his dull eyes and asked back: "Don't you know me?"

"No, I don't know you," growled Simmons, "but you'll know me—and be sorry for it!"

"I am already," said the rookie after exhaling another cloud of smoke.

"You're what?"

"Sorry I know you."

Now, this wasn't at all as it should have been. The rookie was not behaving according to the dope. By all the rules of the ancient game of ragging the recruit, he should have quailed and faded away at Simmons' first curt interrogatory.

"I asked you who you was!" repeated Simmons in a choking voice.

"And I asked you if you didn't know."

"Well, who are you?"

"Look!" bade the rookie. He removed his elbow from the bunk, thrust one hand into his shirt and stroked an imaginary mustache with the other.

"Do you know me now?" he asked.

"No," said Simmons, "I don't."

"I'm the Statue of Liberty on a vacation," the other announced.

A roar of laughter arose in the squad room. Simmons knew it was directed at him, and he leaped forward. His freckled face was crimson, his heavy chin was thrust out and his wide shoulders worked in circles as he loosened the muscles of his back, preparatory to delivering to this "fresh guy" the only

kind of a rebuke he believed the rookie would heed—a physical one.

The newcomer took his cigarette from his mouth, and blew an insulting puff of smoke in Simmons' face.

"Lose anything?" he asked. "A goat, or somethin'?"

Simmons reached out a muscular right arm. His intention was to pick up this impudent shrimp, and humiliate him by putting him across his knee and spanking him; but the corporal's big paw closed on empty air. An astounding thing had happened. The recruit, who had been standing a picture of careless indolence, suddenly became active. He thrust one thin leg behind one of Simmons' heavy props, and lunged out with his right hand, palm open. The blow caught the corporal just under the chin. It was a slight stroke, but Simmons was leaning forward in his effort to seize the other and it was sufficient to throw the corporal off his balance. Simmons' leg caught in the outstretched limb of the recruit; and he went down in a heap on a bunk.

Another gale of laughter greeted this latest victory of David over Goliath. Furious, Simmons squirmed to his feet and made another rush at the rookie, who was regarding him with a tantalizing grin of contempt. The other merely stepped aside, and Simmons' own momentum carried him to the head of the bunk. His forehead struck the iron post, and he staggered back dazed.

The corporal's next attack was successful. He seized the rookie, lifted him off his feet, turned him around as he dropped to the edge of a bunk and then, while those who saw shrieked with laughter, delivered to him a sound and humiliating spanking.

The victim struggled and kicked, but the big corporal's grip was like iron. It wasn't until Simmons' hand smarted from caressing the recruit's breeches that the corporal set him on his feet, turned and started to walk away. The chastised one, all but frothing at the mouth with fury, grabbed a folding chair from the floor, raised it aloft and would have brought it down on Simmons' head had not Lefty O'Neill, who was watching the show from the top of a neighboring bunk, kicked out with his right foot, caught the rookie just under the elbow and knocked the chair from his hands.

Simmons, who believed that desperate cases require desperate remedies, strode up to the disturber and swung a punch from his heel, which, finding a home on the other's chin, laid him flat on a bunk with all the fight knocked out of him.

All in all, it was quite the liveliest evening Company M had known.

The rookie's name was Ethelbert Kyle, and the whole company laughed when the top sergeant tipped them off about it.

"Ethelbert!" cried Lefty O'Neill. "Ethelbert! Oh, gosh!"

"Mustn't it have been an awful shock to his old lady to see how he lived up to the fancy handle!" suggested Joe Smith.

"Wish I knew it before I hit him!" muttered Simmons.

"Why?" asked O'Neill.

"I'd have knocked the second syllable out of Ethelbert!"

Ethelbert, who, of course, became celebrated as "Ethel" among the two hundred and fifty members of Company M, took to the military game like a duck does to a charge of bird shot. He believed the selective-draft law had been framed solely to interfere with his personal liberty and activities, which, the company learned from fragments of his conversation, had consisted almost entirely of defending his title as pool champion of a mysterious district which he referred to as "southern Union County, New Jersey." Why southern Union County should have been deprived of so expert a manipulator of a pointed stick and imitation ivory balls to furnish the National Army with a most indifferent private, Ethelbert could not see, and he proceeded to demonstrate his displeasure with his new lot in life in a way that left no room for doubt as to his beliefs and convictions.

Between Ethelbert and Simmons,

following the exciting incidents of the recruit's arrival at camp, had sprung up a feud of considerable magnitude. It wasn't Simmons' fault. The big corporal was an honest, hearty fellow, faithful and eager to do as much more than his bit as he could, now that he had entered the government service. When his first anger at Ethelbert had passed—and it did, quickly—the recruit had become merely a member of his squad, one who needed the instruction and guidance which it was the corporal's duty to furnish. In Ethelbert's mean, little heart, though, the memory of the humiliation Simmons had visited upon him rankled and grew to a malignant hate. He felt he owed the corporal a score, and he proceeded to pay it in the only way that was safe and certain—by sneaking, underhanded methods against which the honest Simmons could offer but a weak resistance.

Ethelbert's first opportunity for revenge came on the evening of the third day he was in camp. The governor of the State was visiting Camp Richards, and he was to review the 613th Infantry. It was quite an event, of course, and great activity on the part of the men of the regiment preceded it. In every barracks safety razors began removing fugitive bits of beard from jaws that already would have passed inspection; there was great polishing of shoes, shining of rifle barrels and removal of dust specks from uniforms.

Now, by dint of nudges and sotto-voce hints delivered out of the corners of comrades' mouths, Ethelbert was able to take his place in ranks with his rifle on his shoulder and not make display sufficient to disgrace the company of his uncertainty as to whether "squads right" was something you did with your rifle or with your feet. Simmons, who was on his left, and Lefty O'Neill, who was on his right, were steering him through that regimental parade; and doing their job well.

The band was playing one of Sousa's best, and Ethelbert, unwilling soldier though he was, was feeling the thrill that seizes even the veteran, to whom regimental dress parade is an old story, when, carried along by the rhythm of a martial air, he strides in company line past a reviewing officer.

This wasn't satisfactory at all. Ethelbert found himself actually enjoying marching in the front rank, erect and with eyes straight ahead, holding his proper interval of four inches from Simmons on his left and O'Neill on his right, and doing his part in maintaining the perfect alignment of the company. And, as he realized the emotions that were rising in him, he was filled with disgust—particularly with himself for permitting the strains of music and the cadence of marching feet to carry him away; and with the whole military system, which snatches a fellow from his peaceful, enjoyable life and sets him to tramping around drill grounds, doing absurd physical exercises, and performing demeaning tasks like polishing his own shoes and sweeping out the barracks.

All of Ethelbert's hatred of his new position surged through him. He remembered that his feet hurt and that his muscles were sore from the unaccustomed physical activities of the last few days. Out of the corner of his eye he glanced at Simmons. The big corporal was swinging along, chest out, chin up—a soldier every inch of him—apparently oblivious of everything, keeping step and line subconsciously. And, all at once, Ethelbert realized that Simmons epitomized everything which he found hateful in camp.

"The big stiff!" he thought. "I'll fix him!"

Like a flash, so quickly that the movement was imperceptible, Ethelbert brought his left elbow up, striking Simmons' forearm a smart blow. The corporal's arm trembled, and his rifle quivered on his shoulder.

"Steady, there!" he whispered, believing, of course, that the blow was accidental. The company was now only a few feet from the reviewing officer, and Simmons wanted nothing to happen on the right flank—which would be directly under the eye of the governor—to mar the perfect alignment

which Company M had kept all the way down the field.

As he spoke, Ethelbert struck him again. This second stroke, light though it was, was sufficient to break Simmons' grip on his rifle, and the piece slipped from his shoulder. The corporal made a sudden, desperate attempt to grab the falling rifle, but his hand caught in the sling and the weapon fell diagonally across his body, the muzzle to the left.

Falling, the rifle struck the piece of the man on Simmons' left, and knocked it from his shoulder. The two weapons dropped to the ground together, and Simmons and the other man tripped over them. The rear-rank men stumbled over their falling comrades, and pitched out headlong, their rifles leaving their grasp and landing ten feet in front of them. One of the weapons turned completely over in the air, and landed bayonet down, sticking up in the ground like a hitching post.

The three squads to the left of Simmons were completely demoralized. Several men tittered. The file closers shouted out curt commands, and began to call the cadence of the march in a frantic endeavor to get the rapidly disorganizing right wing of the company into order again.

As well to have tried obtain alignment and order in a jumble of logs falling over a dam. Discipline and training were forgotten. The company line was not merely ragged—it didn't exist at all. A few squads on the left flank were keeping a semblance of order, but the center of the company was bellied out like a mainsail in a stiff wind, there was a startling hiatus at the right of the center where Simmons and the others were trying to recover their rifles and their places in ranks; and the right wing of the company—ten feet from the reviewing officer and the visiting governor—was straggling along in chaos.

The company commander turned as he heard the falling rifles and the sharp cries of the sergeants. The sight that met his eyes filled him with a desire that only his long training in self-control was able to stifle—a desire to break out into an eloquent combination of heartfelt oaths. Just when he should have been commanding his company to execute "eyes right" as a mark of respect to the reviewing officer and his guest, he was industriously sawing the air with both hands as he endeavored to make a series of incoherent commands understood by two hundred and fifty blithering idiots over whose training he had fumed, sweated and labored for six months.

Company M was disgraced, and it had passed a hundred yards beyond the reviewing officer before the men caught the cadence again and were in good military order. And the disgrace of the company was felt keenly by every man in it, from the captain down—except Ethelbert.

He was delighted. He was feeling the exultation of a worthy deed well accomplished. He had shown them up—the fakers! Strutting around with their chins in the air, expecting him to do it, too—and to like it! He regretted deeply that he could not let others share in his triumph, but there were no kindred spirits among the two hundred and fifty members of Company M, and, besides, he knew that punishment of no uncertain sort would follow a disclosure that it was he who had messed up the company line at review.

Naturally, there was an investigation. Corporal Simmons, who was reported as the man who had first dropped his rifle—an offense of no mean importance in military life—was summoned before the captain.

"Simmons," said the company commander, "what happened to you today?"

"I—I dropped my rifle, sir," faltered Simmons.

"You dropped your rifle!" repeated the captain with deep irony. "Why?"

"The man on my right bumped me, sir," said Simmons.

"He did," said the captain, "and that made you drop your rifle."

"Yes, sir."

"Simmons, you're wearing chevrons. That should mean that you're a better

soldier than the majority of the company. It is quite a rudimentary part of a soldier's duty to be able to march and to hold his rifle. A good soldier certainly should not permit his piece to fall at dress parade. Who was the man on your right?"

"Kyle, sir."

"Go get him."

It was Ethelbert's first introduction to the company commander.

"Your name Kyle?" the captain asked.

"Huh-huh," grunted Ethelbert.

"What?" snapped the captain.

"Yeh," said Ethelbert. "K-y-l-e," he spelled.

Ethelbert returned the captain's stern look impudently.

"You're new here," the captain began. "Shut up!" he bade as Ethelbert made to reply. "You haven't got the groundwork of military behavior and military courtesy implanted in you yet. Otherwise, you wouldn't say 'huh-huh' and 'yeh' to your company commander. 'Yes, *sir*' is the proper reply. You'll remember that, won't you?"

"Yes, sir," promised Ethelbert with affected humility.

"Very good. Now, what I'm anxious to find out is what made you bump Corporal Simmons' arm hard enough to make him drop his rifle."

Ethelbert thought quickly. The captain had spoken to him in a not unkindly way, while Simmons, he guessed from the corporal's attitude and the way the captain looked at him, was "in wrong." Ethelbert, who was clever enough in his own way, saw a chance and seized it.

"I'll tell you, sir," he said. "I've only been here a couple of days, and I don't know much about drillin' and all that—yet. But, when we were marchin' this afternoon, Simmons here kept pushin' me. I remembered bein' told how we ought to keep four inches from the man next to us, so I just raised up my elbow a little—like I'd been shown how to do—to push him away. He got mad and made a swipe at me, and his gun fell. I'm awful sorry, sir, if I done anything I shouldn't."

There was the ring of truth in his voice, and his eyes met the gaze of the captain squarely. The company commander was nobody's fool. He wasn't particularly struck by the thin rat face and unhealthy look of this recruit who talked so glibly to him; but, on the other hand, there was no ground for disbelieving Ethelbert. Simmons, as a noncommissioned officer of six months' experience, ought to have known better than to drop his rifle anyhow, no matter what the circumstances; so the captain faced Simmons, and said:

"I'm going to let this matter drop. However the thing happened, the fact remains that it should not have happened to *you*. I'm disappointed with you, Simmons. That will be all," he finished, dismissing the pair with a wave of his hand.

Now, an interested listener to the little colloquy just told of was Lieutenant Wylie Brice, a young man for whom the company commander entertained great regard and respect. Lieutenant Brice was a Plattsburg product. He had resigned his position as instructor in English, history and Latin in the ultrafashionable St. George's School for Boys in the New England hills to go to training camp, and he had come away with a silver bar on his shoulder. Three years of sowing the seeds of knowledge in the unfertile minds of the spoiled and pampered scions of too-wealthy families had taught young Brice considerably more about handling recalcitrant and rebellious young persons of the male sex than the company commander had learned in four years at West Point and eight years at army posts. Lieutenant Brice's methods were not those which the captain remembered observing any veteran commanders use, but they had this to recommend them—they were highly effective.

That was why, after Simmons and Ethelbert had departed, that the captain turned an interested ear when Brice, suddenly and without preliminaries, announced:

"Kyle was lying."

"How do you know?" asked the captain.

Brice smiled. "Observation of a great many young men of his stamp," he said, "coupled with a few things I remember from a course in psychology I took. I should say," he added, "that Kyle deliberately knocked Simmons' rifle out of his hands. I should also say that the two of them have had a quarrel of some sort, that Kyle is still nursing a grudge against Simmons and is trying to pay it off in nasty, underhanded ways."

"Say, who are you?" demanded the captain. "Sherlock Holmes?"

"No," Brice laughed, "you probably noticed all those things yourself, but your long habit of looking at things in the straightforward army way caused you unconsciously to put them out of your mind. I know Simmons is an honest, decent fellow. Kyle, though, has 'sneak' written all over him. Didn't you see the way he played up to you when you half excused him because he was new at the military game? Didn't you see his look of triumph when you reprimanded Simmons? Of course, you did; but you've become so used to believing that every man who puts on a uniform immediately becomes truthful—no matter how many other failings he may retain—that you didn't interpret what you saw correctly."

"Maybe you're right," admitted the captain.

"I think I am," said Brice. "At all events, I'm going to watch that pair."

Now, Ethelbert should have been well satisfied with his day's work. Not every disgruntled recruit could throw the whole company into disorder at dress parade, bring the wrath of the company commander down on the head of one he regarded as his enemy, and escape scot-free himself. But Ethelbert was not content to let his campaign against Simmons rest there. The meek way in which Simmons accepted the captain's reprimand, and his failure to revenge himself upon the cause of it, proved to Ethelbert that the big corporal was one who had foolish notions about "honor" and "taking his medicine;" therefore, he was to be attacked with impunity.

The following morning Simmons jumped from his bunk at first call, and reached out for his clothes. The company commander was a stickler for punctuality. Unlike most of the officers at the cantonment, he stood at reveille himself, and it always went ill with any member of his company who was reported late at the first formation of the day.

Simmons couldn't find his uniform. He had placed it over the foot of his bunk the night before, in orderly array, so that he could reach out in the darkness and attire himself from hat to shoes with his eyes shut. The clothing was gone! As he plowed through the squad room in his bare feet, Simmons heard a series of shouts from various quarters:

"Whose breeches are these?"

"Who owns these shoes?"

"Hey, this ain't my shirt!"

Guided by the cries, he got his outfit together, but, when he tried to clothe himself, he encountered mountainous difficulties in the form of knotted leggings laces, breeches that were bound up in a belt, a shirt whose arms had been tied together. Simmons got out in front of the barracks just in time to hear Lefty O'Neill call out: "Third squad—Corporal Simmons absent!"

He talked to the first sergeant, and had the absence with which he was charged changed to lateness in the morning report; but the harm was done—Simmons, who hadn't had a single black mark placed against his name since he came to camp, was given a tour of kitchen police, most unpleasant of all military duties, as a punishment for his tardiness at reveille.

Of course, the corporal quickly arrived at a solution of the mystery of the scattered clothing—Ethelbert had got up in the night, removed the uniform from Simmons' bunk, tied the knots in the garments, and thrown them here and there through the squad room. There was nobody else in the company whose idea of a joke took such a perverted form. Innocent fun Simmons

could endure with the best of them, and he had played many a harmless practical joke himself; but deliberately to do something that could only result in a comrade being punished—such an action the honest Simmons could not understand.

With nothing but his own suspicions to back him, Simmons said nothing, and, in ranks that day, he stood and marched beside Ethelbert, instructing him, guiding him, endeavoring to make his road to military knowledge easy.

Which sincere efforts to help him Ethelbert, of course, took as proof that the course of petty meanness to which he was treating Simmons was having its effect; and he redoubled his efforts to annoy the corporal and get him into trouble with his superiors.

When Lieutenant Brice stepped before Simmons at rifle inspection a few days later, the corporal threw his piece up to "inspection arms," and permitted his superior to take it from his hands. Brice examined the surface of the weapon in the easy, methodical way which all officers learn; then he dropped the butt to his knees, and inserted his thumb in the chamber so that the light, reflected from his thumb nail, would illuminate the inside of the barrel.

The lieutenant peeped in through the muzzle, and raised his eyebrows.

"Simmons," he asked, "did you clean this barrel?"

"Yes, sir," answered Simmons, staring at the officer. He had devoted the better part of an hour to cleaning the rifle the night before, and, when he had finished, the rifling had shone like a mirror in the sunlight.

"It's very dirty," observed the lieutenant. "See me after inspection."

Simmons couldn't understand it. He realized that it was quite possible a speck or two of dust might have found their way into the barrel during the night, but that the barrel should be described as "very dirty"—that was impossible. He waited with scant patience for the end of the inspection, and, as soon as the company had been dismissed, he threw back the bolt of the rifle and held the piece up so that the light streamed through the barrel.

"Phew!" he whistled. What the lieutenant had said of the condition of the rifle didn't begin to describe it. The bore was not only dirty—it was almost entirely clogged up, and, as Simmons held the butt elevated to gaze through the muzzle, a drop or two of dirty oil trickled out and fell on his cheek.

Now, Simmons knew he had removed every particle of oil from the barrel the night before. The last swab he had pushed through with his ramrod had emerged from the barrel almost as clean and white as it had entered. He dropped the rifle, closed the bolt, and started for the barracks. And, as he turned, he noticed Ethelbert grinning at him triumphantly.

Simmons saw red. Instinctively, he knew that Ethelbert was in some way responsible for the condition of his rifle, and to this day Simmons doesn't know how he restrained himself from beating the grinning recruit into insensibility then and there. But he managed to hold himself in check, hurried to the barracks, got a ramrod, and hastily ran a piece of flannel through the barrel of his rifle. He smothered an exclamation as he noted the condition of the swab when it came out. It was covered with oil mixed with the red soil that was characteristic of the country in which Camp Richards lay.

Simmons carried rifle and swab to the orderly room where he found Lieutenant Brice.

"Sir," he said, "I wouldn't lie out of nothin'. Last night at taps my rifle was as clean as I could make it. You know how it was this mornin'. Look at this, sir."

He handed Brice the swab he had just run through the barrel.

"I think I know how my rifle got dirty," he went on. "Somebody—and I think I know who—squirted some oil down the barrel while I was asleep. Then he just dropped a handful of dust into the muzzle—probably while we were waitin' to fall in for inspection."

The lieutenant glanced first at the swab, then at Simmons. The corporal's flushed face and the smoldering glow of anger in his eyes gave indisputable evidence that he was telling the truth —if the lieutenant needed any such evidence, which he did not.

"Who did it, Simmons?" Brice asked.

Simmons set his jaw grimly and shook his head. Lieutenant Brice smiled at him.

"I understand, Simmons," he said. "I don't like a talebearer, either. I don't ask you to tell me so that I can punish anybody. My job here is to help every man in Company M reach his maximum of military efficiency. If there is a man in the company who would do to a comrade what you suspect one of the members of the company did to you, it is your duty to tell your superiors about it—not that you may be revenged, but that the man may be taught that his action was not that of an American soldier. Who did it, Simmons?"

"Kyle, sir," said Simmons without hesitation.

"That's the young man who helped you drop your rifle? I thought so," said the lieutenant as Simmons nodded. "You and he had trouble, didn't you? There's a sort of feud between you."

Simmons gazed at the lieutenant in amazement. "How did you know that, sir?" he stammered.

"Never mind," smiled the officer. "The point is that while you and Kyle are fighting with each other, both of you are likely to forget that your real job is to get ready to fight the Germans. The efficiency and morale of the whole company is lessened by just so much as the minds of you two men are taken from your work. Simmons, have you read the Bible much?"

This was such an unexpected question that it took Simmons several seconds to reply.

"Not very much, sir," he confessed at last.

"You should. You'd be astonished at how much that is useful to a soldier you'll find there. For instance, there's the parable of the ninety and nine. Do you know it?"

"That's some kind of a church song, ain't it, sir?"

"Yes, the parable has been made into a hymn, too. Do you recall, Simmons, what the good shepherd did when he lost one of his sheep?"

"Yes, sir. He left the ninety-nine to shift for themselves while he hunted up the stray one."

"Right! And we are confronted by almost exactly the same situation in this company. There are about two hundred and fifty of us. Two hundred and forty-eight are safe in the fold—they're doing their duty as soldiers, learning all their instructors can teach them of the art of warfare. Two, though, have strayed—you and Kyle. Oh, don't feel hurt," counseled the lieutenant as Simmons started back when his name was coupled with Ethelbert's, "from my standpoint you are a stray sheep—not through your own fault, but because Kyle's annoyances prevent you from putting your whole mind on your work. Now, it's my job to get you two stray sheep back into the fold, and you've got to help me. As corporal of the third squad, you, too, are a shepherd with a stray sheep—Kyle. You get him back in your fold, and in doing so you'll bring both of you back in mine."

"But how——" began Simmons.

"Ride him!" ordered the lieutenant with such intensity of tone that Simmons started back. "Keep after him night and day—don't give him a chance to rest, to think, to do anything he wants. I've been watching both of you since the night you dropped your rifle. I've noticed how you tried to help Kyle; how you've not permitted his meanness to get under your skin. That's one way of bringing a fellow like him to time, but it won't do in his case. He doesn't seem to respond to kindness. So go after him hard—stir him up, keep him fighting mad all the time. Go out of your way to pound him. Don't, whatever you do, strike him; but show him that you're the boss, and that, if he doesn't obey you, he'll get into trou-

ble. I'll watch the result. That will do, Simmons."

From that moment on Ethelbert had no reason to suffer from the illusion that the army life was any bed of roses. About one-tenth of the tasks Simmons dug up for him to perform were necessary; the necessity for the rest existed entirely in the corporal's mind. Simmons was astonished at the ingenuity he displayed in finding humiliating, tiring things for Ethelbert to do. Also, he forbore extending the helping hand himself, and, without informing the other members of his squad that Ethelbert was under treatment, he restrained them from aiding Ethelbert by so much as a word of advice—not a difficult thing to do, by the way. Ethelbert was working out his own salvation, and working overtime at it.

After three days of bullying Ethelbert and assigning him to obnoxious fatigue duty during the periods when he really should have been resting, Simmons made a remarkable discovery. This was that Ethelbert's predominant characteristic was not his meanness but his vanity. Ethelbert firmly believed that, potentially, he was far and away the best man at the cantonment—and he didn't exclude the commandant or any of the lesser superior officers, either.

The knowledge of this fact gave Simmons a hold on Ethelbert which the big corporal proceeded to apply mercilessly. Each order to perform a task was accompanied by an expression of doubt that Ethelbert would be able to accomplish it. Each completed task found the corporal dissatisfied. Simmons always picked some flaw in everything Ethelbert did, and noted the fact with words that left no doubt that the corporal believed Ethelbert was incapable of executing so simple a feat as washing his own hands properly.

The effect of this badgering on Ethelbert, who firmly believed that all he needed was sufficient practice to enable him to do anything well, was rather mixed. One so conceited, so self-sufficient as he, naturally resented the fact that he was being "ridden." His first inclination, then, was to dog it—to go about the extra duties Simmons found for him in a slipshod way. Two circumstances, however, taught him the futility of this. One was that the company commander, who had been informed by Lieutenant Brice of the experiment that was being tried on Ethelbert, made it very plain to him that failure to obey Corporal Simmons literally and faithfully would result in punishment more dire than anything Ethelbert had pictured in his wildest dreams. The other reason why Ethelbert took pains with his work was that his vanity would not permit him to give Simmons, his enemy, the opportunity to say with truth that he was inefficient.

The struggle that was going on within Ethelbert was good for his soul, just as the extra work he was doing was good for his body. Physically, he improved rapidly. He took on weight. His cheeks filled out. His eyes brightened. His shoulders went back and his chest up. Ethelbert felt his muscles growing stronger, and was glad. He wasn't glad, though, that he was growing stronger in mind and spirit—because he didn't realize that he was.

It was more than a month after Simmons first began to play *Simon Legree* to Ethelbert's *Uncle Tom* that the corporal one afternoon broke out into laughter that made his neighbors look up in wonder. Simmons had just had an idea. Outside the barracks he had noticed a huge pile of intrenching tools —picks, shovels, mauls, crowbars and the like. The company was having an unexpected rest period of two hours, and Simmons had just reflected that it would be a rare joke to let Ethelbert spend this leisure time in carrying the tools to another barracks—and then carrying them back again.

Accordingly, with minute instructions as to how each separate tool was to be disposed of, he set Ethelbert to performing the first part of the task, which the young man, with much grumbling, set out to do.

It took Ethelbert all of an hour to remove his clumsy loads the hundred feet or so that Simmons had directed.

Then he returned to the squad room to throw himself on his bunk, tired and perspiring.

"Finished, Kyle?" asked Simmons, without cracking a smile.

"Yep," replied Ethelbert in no too polite tone.

"Oh, no, you're not!" exclaimed Simmons. "You're to go out now, and carry them all back again!"

"What!" screamed Ethelbert, jumping to his feet.

Simmons repeated the order, making it all the more tantalizing by the calm way he spoke it and the fact that he was lying on his bunk, smoking a cigarette.

"I'm damned if I will!" blazed Ethelbert. "What do you think I am—a truck horse?"

"You ain't got sense enough for that," Simmons told him.

For a second Ethelbert glared at the corporal. Then, fuming with anger, he rushed for the orderly room. Lieutenant Brice looked up as he entered.

"Sir," said Ethelbert, "I'm gettin' a raw deal from our corporal."

"How is that?" asked the lieutenant quietly. He regarded Ethelbert carefully, and was pleased to note the gleam in his eye. It wasn't the cunning, treacherous glow he had seen there before; it was the reflection of a fire of honest anger.

Ethelbert poured out the story of the indignities to which Simmons had subjected him. The lieutenant had difficulty in keeping his face straight—especially at Ethelbert's heart-rending version of the incident of the intrenching tools.

He was silent for a few seconds after Ethelbert finished. Then:

"Why don't you lick him?" he asked.

"Wha-what?" gasped Ethelbert.

"Why don't you lick him?" repeated Brice. He motioned Ethelbert to come closer. "I know my advice is contrary to all military precedent, but I imagine from what you've told me that the only way you and Simmons can ever get together is by fighting it out. Of course," said the lieutenant in a tone that suggested he believed Ethelbert would lose his right hand before he'd stand for anything of the sort, "of course, I *could* order Simmons not to use his position as a corporal to take out on you any private spite or jealousy he may have, but a man like you wouldn't want that. *You* want to stand in your own shoes, and fight your own battles. *You* don't want to call in help, do you?"

Ethelbert murmured something entirely unintelligible.

"Of course not!" the lieutenant asserted. "You're too much of a man for that. Now, don't tell anybody it's by my advice you're doing it, but what I'd suggest is this: Carry those tools back. Don't give Simmons a chance to get anything on you. By the time you're finished you'll probably be too tired to start any fights, but, when you're rested—to-morrow, say—you go to Simmons and put the whole thing up to him. Tell him you're tired of being bullied, and that with your fists you're going to keep yourself from being bullied. I'll give you my word of honor that neither of you will be punished for fighting. Do it quietly, though—don't let the rest of the company know about it."

Ethelbert gazed at the lieutenant in speechless amazement. "But I don't know——" he faltered. "I'm——"

"You mean you don't know whether you can lick him? I'll *bet* you can!" declared the lieutenant. "You've got that fighting look about you!"

Now, this, of course, was not the exact truth, but Lieutenant Brice, as has been hinted before, knew several things besides military tactics, one of which was the mental processes of a youth of Ethelbert's stamp. Ethelbert swelled up like a sponge under the flattering suggestion that he was big Simmons' physical superior. The muscles of his jaw worked under his tanned skin. His mouth tightened in a determined way. Quite unconsciously, he slipped his left hand behind his back to feel the biceps of his right arm. His head went up, and his eyes narrowed.

"Do you mean that, sir?" he asked eagerly.

"Of course!"

"And I won't get into trouble?"

"I give you my word that you won't."

"May I go, sir?"

"Go ahead, Kyle."

Ethelbert fled from the office. He passed Simmons' bunk on his way out of the barracks, and Simmons gazed after him in wonderment. Never before had the corporal seen quite that expression on Kyle's face.

Ethelbert was scarcely out of the building when somebody at a remote end of the squad room called out, "'ten-shun!" and Simmons leaped out of his bunk with the rest. A few seconds later Lieutenant Brice, whose approach had caused the cry that disturbed the resting soldiers, stopped before Simmons.

"Simmons," he said, "come into the office, please."

Wondering, Simmons followed to the orderly room.

"Simmons," said the lieutenant as he closed the door, "I've just instructed Kyle to give you a licking."

Had he said, "The commandant has ordered you to be shot at sunrise" the effect on Simmons would have been the same.

"You what, sir?" the corporal stammered when he could speak.

"I instructed Kyle to give you a licking," said Brice again. "I've informed him that neither of you will be punished for fighting," the officer added, smiling at Simmons' look of amazement. "It's against all rules and precedents, I know, but I think, Simmons, we shall find it a most important part of the search for stray sheep we began some time ago. Probably you don't realize it, Simmons, but Kyle would have licked you long ago—if he was able. The only thing that has kept him off you was your very evident superior physical strength. Give Kyle as much muscle as you—and as good general health—and he's just as good a man as you are. When he was doing mean, sneaking tricks to you, he was merely fighting your big muscles with the only weapons he had. He'd rather have punched the life out of you, but a fellow with a puny body has the same fear of a man like you as you have of going into battle with a British tank. Now, Kyle's a better man physically than he used to be. He knows it, and he's willing to fight you."

"But," objected Simmons, "I can't fight him. I'd—I'd kill him!"

"Oh, no, you wouldn't!" smiled Brice. "When you do fight, the boot's going to be on the other foot—Kyle's going to lick *you!*"

Simmons, who, at a recent entertainment in the camp, had gone a fast and furious three rounds with the cantonment boxing instructor, a young man who had narrowly escaped becoming middleweight champion of the world, was to be forgiven for suspecting that his superior had suddenly gone crazy.

"Kyle's goin' to what!" he finally managed to say.

"He's going to lick you," Brice repeated. "I ordered him to do it."

"But—but——"

"I know you can, Simmons. You could do it with one hand behind your back—and with your eyes shut. But the point is that you're going to let Kyle lick you!"

Can you imagine a man going up to John D. Rockefeller and saying, "You're going to give all your money away—and go out and hunt a job?" Brice's words had just that effect on Simmons.

"*Let* him lick me!" he gasped. "Why?"

"For the good of the service," said Brice. "I realize, Simmons, it's asking a great deal of you, but I think a victory over you will just about put the finishing touches on our young friend. He's willing to fight you, which is a step forward; for it's something he wouldn't have done a month ago to keep himself out of the guardhouse. And, if he thinks he's proved he's a better man than you, there'll be no stopping him—he'll be the most enthusiastic, spirited soldier we have in the company."

"Maybe," said Simmons doubtfully, "but—but who'll know about this?"

"Oh," grinned the lieutenant, "you're thinking about your reputation as a

fighter. I don't blame you, Simmons; you must have worked pretty hard building it up. But nobody will know about it," he declared. "You can let O'Neill and Smith—perhaps a couple more you know you can trust—in on what's what. They won't tell, and, if Kyle starts spreading the glad news around himself, the company will probably laugh at him. They certainly will never believe he licked you. Anyhow, we're not trying to build up Kyle's reputation as a pugilist—it's the psychological effect of this fight on him that we're after."

"The what, sir?"

Brice explained what he meant.

"I get you, sir," grinned Simmons when he had finished. "You mean a guy that thinks he's good, and ain't, has a better chance of gettin' away with things than a guy who's good, but don't know it."

"Exactly. Let Kyle get the idea that he's 'good,' and he'll do the rest himself."

"All right, sir; you're on. I don't think he'll hurt me much, anyhow."

"Neither do I," said the lieutenant.

Simmons waited for Kyle to challenge him, which Ethelbert did the next afternoon, with a pale face, but an air of resolution that quite astonished the corporal.

Then Simmons gathered around him Lefty O'Neill, Joe Smith, Micky Finn and Tony Moretti, trustworthy third squaders, to whom he detailed the plot of the drama in which he and Ethelbert were to be featured.

"And let me tell you somethin'," he finished. "You guys have got to do this thing serious. You got to make this feller think he's winnin' on the level. The first one of you that tips his mitt, I'll quit lettin' Kyle punch me, and hammer your head off! Now, get that!"

The trusty quartet swore by all they held sacred that Simmons could place implicit confidence in their discretion.

The battleground was a gun shed in a remote corner of the cantonment, which, for a mysterious cause that, possibly, Lieutenant Brice could have explained, was left unlocked and unguarded that night. Lefty O'Neill was detailed as referee. Micky Finn volunteered to second Ethelbert. Simmons chose Moretti as his handler, and Joe Smith, much to his disgust, was picked for lookout.

"I'll bust your neck if you don't do it!" Simmons whispered to him when Smith objected to doing sentinel duty outside the gun shed, where a sight of the battle would be denied him. "We got to make this thing look good!"

Which persuasive speech won the rebel over.

The gladiators stripped to the waist, and Ethelbert wondered if Brice hadn't overestimated his physical powers as soon as he caught a glimpse of Simmons' hairy torso and knotted arms.

"Aw, he's a big stiff!" whispered Finn, sensing the fear in his principal's breast, as he adjusted the boxing gloves. "You can lick him—easy!"

"Can I?" asked Ethelbert hopefully. His courage was oozing out by the second.

"Sure!" said Finn. "What d'you think I picked your corner for? All you got to do is to make every punch count—and keep him from hitting you."

Ethelbert had to admit there was some sense to this argument, although the program of battle, as outlined by his second, seemed to him easier of pronouncement than of accomplishment.

"Right now I'm willin' to bet five to one you win!" the encouraging Finn assured him.

Ethelbert wanted to take about five dollars' worth of this easy money himself, but, on reflection, decided that such an action would not be sportsmanlike. He was immensely astonished, though, when Finn, who seemed a real gambler, strode over to Simmons' corner and quoted his odds. Simmons waved him away, but Moretti stood up and offered to bet him "feefity cents."

"G'wan!" declared Finn in scorn. "I ain't lookin' for no piker bets—I want real dough!

"What d'you know about that!" he

said to Ethelbert when he got back. "They're afraid to bet! Kid, this is a *cinch* for you!"

Lefty O'Neill produced a dented tin pan, which he announced would have to serve as a gong. He then proceeded to give the combatants specific and lengthy instructions as to how he intended fulfilling his triple office of referee, timekeeper, and master of ceremonies.

"And remember," was his last caution, "it's Markis of Queensboro rules you're fightin' under, not—well, anyhow, that's what it is. D'you understand?"

Both pugilists nodded, Ethelbert rather indefinitely.

"O. K." said O'Neill. "Hey, wait a minute!" he ordered, as Ethelbert crouched into the warlike attitude in which very young boxing persons love to have their photographs taken. "Wait for the gong! Well, for cripe's sake!" he exclaimed, as he looked for that highly necessary article and found Moretti filling it with water from a faucet in the wall. "Hey, wop! What d'you think you're doin'?"

"Filla da pan," said Moretti. "Moost washa da face."

"Your own?" asked O'Neill.

"Nah!" answered Moretti in disgust. "See-mone's. When he getta da bloody nose," he explained.

O'Neill rescued his gong, and, returning to the ring—which, like the equator, was quite an imaginary one—slammed it against his knee.

"Go to it, lads!" he bade them.

Ethelbert fell immediately into his knuckle pusher's crouch. Simmons, who was a fairly well-known amateur middleweight before he was drafted, tried to forget all he knew about boxing and adopt a clumsy, amateurish stance. With all the fervor and abandon of an overfed pet dog attacking a grizzly, Ethelbert glided forward—three steps. He stopped, grunted like a man lifting a barrel onto a truck and made a vicious swing with his right. Simmons didn't move, but the blow missed the nearest part of his body by at least three feet.

"That's the ol' pep, Ethel!" called out Micky Finn, hiding a grin. "You got him scared!"

Ethelbert wondered if this could be true. He tried to fasten his mind on Simmons' refusal to bet on himself, but a memory of the punch the corporal had given him the night he reached camp kept bobbing up in his mind. He went three steps forward again, made another swing and then retired. This time he observed the effect of his sortie on Simmons, and was pained to observe that the corporal didn't even blink as the glove whistled so close to him. Well, it would have been close—for a shell. So Ethelbert made up his mind that his adversary was not scared, but must have some deep-laid, Napoleonic plan of battle. And he became more cautious.

He advanced again—three steps, made another swing and glided back. This ritual he adhered to like a mechanical doll—three steps forward, a swing and three steps back.

Simmons, who had no intention in the world of opposing Ethelbert's punches with anything but his face and body, was troubled. He had promised Lieutenant Brice he would let Ethelbert lick him, but how in the world are you going to let a man lick you—if he won't even hit you? He moved a little closer to Ethelbert, with an idea of gradually working himself into the range of his adversary's gloves. Ethelbert again went three steps forward, made one of his swings and went three steps back—only, he lessened his onward journey by just as much as Simmons had advanced.

"I guess," Simmons reflected, "my only chance is to grab his wrists, and punch myself with his gloves!"

"Go on, Ethel—beat him up!" advised Lefty O'Neill, with an idea of heartening that bashful warrior.

"See-mone! See-mone!" cheered Moretti, rushing, like a good second, to the defense of his principal.

Simmons glared at Moretti over his shoulder. "Shut up, you damn fool!" he whispered hoarsely, fearing the ef-

fect of his volatile aid's rooting on Ethelbert.

Lefty O'Neill, who wanted *some* action, even in a battle like this one, sneaked over behind Simmons, and gave the big corporal a mighty push. For the first time, Ethelbert varied his program of three steps forward, swing, and three steps back. When he saw the huge Simmons pitching toward him, he took only one step forward, omitted the swing entirely, turned tail and ran as hard as he could—and as far. For he didn't stop until he crashed into a pile of rifle cases. He met this obstacle with stunning force, and, imagining he had encountered the rushing Simmons, threw caution to the winds and began punching the boxes fiercely. Two blows —and the resulting damage to knuckles and forearms—were sufficient to teach him his error, and, shamefaced, he turned to be guided back to the "ring" again by O'Neill.

"Yea, Ethel!" yelled Finn. "You got him goin'!"

"Hey, lay off that!" directed O'Neill in the tone a nice old lady would use to a brute who was whipping his dog. "Give Simmons a chance!"

"I can't!" Finn called back. "He ain't got one!"

Right then Simmons got an inspiration. With a silent prayer that Ethelbert would seize the golden opportunity he was offering, he dropped his guard and faced Finn.

"Who ain't?" he demanded.

Ethelbert took Simmons' apparent distraction from the battle as a gift from heaven. This time he went forward four steps, and delivered the first blow of the fight—a right swing to the head. Simmons felt it, and turned just in time to get Ethelbert's left—plump on the nose. It was no love tap, and the blood spurted from the corporal's nostrils.

"Yah!" yelled Finn. "You big stiff! You don't know enough to face the man you're fightin'! Go get him, Ethel!"

As the blood flooded over Simmons' lips, a thrill shot through Ethelbert. Those crimson streams showed him his adversary was vulnerable. He made another rush forward, and began to punch away, blindly and fiercely. Simmons' instinct and training caused him to bring his guard up unconsciously; but he dropped it as quickly, and steeled himself to bear the patter of blows Ethelbert directed at him.

Bang! Bang! Bang! thudded Ethelbert's gloves against the corporal's face and chest. Ethelbert was no weakling after his training at the camp, and, even to a husky, hardened battler like Simmons, the punches hurt.

Micky Finn was shouting himself hoarse. Moretti, who, despite Simmons' careful exposition of the intents and purposes of the "fight," didn't quite understand, wanted to give Simmons an encouraging cheer. He uttered one or two tentative gasps, but choked himself off before he went too far. Ethelbert wore the look of a man, who, after prospecting fruitlessly for a lifetime, suddenly knocks a nugget out of a hillside. Despite Lieutenant Brice's emboldening assertions, when the actual time to fight arrived, he had no other idea than to prevent himself from receiving too bad a licking—and now he was *winning!* Winning easily, too! Simmons couldn't fight a lick! Micky Finn was right—the corporal was a big stiff!

In and out Ethelbert darted, with the airs and flourishes of a champion polishing off a second rater. Once Simmons had got his opponent fighting, he proceed to make the battle look real by apparently attempting to block Ethelbert's punches and by aiming some blows himself. He saw to it, though, that his gloves always dropped in time to let Ethelbert get his strokes in, and that his swings and jabs were all short or wild.

Lefty O'Neill wasn't really keeping time; but he decided finally that Simmons deserved at least an opportunity to wash the blood from his face, and he hunted up his tin pan.

"Say!" Simmons confided to the referee as Moretti wiped his face, "if you don't think it's some job to let every punch the other guy makes land, and miss all your own—just try it some

time! I nearly busted my arm keepin' a couple of wallops from goin' home! Gee, I'd like to slip just one in!"

Ethelbert was weary, but happy as a pig in a mire.

"I knew I could do it!" he whispered to Micky Finn.

"So did I!" declared Finn with perfect truth.

"I'm goin' to finish him this round!" announced Ethelbert.

"Are you?" asked Finn. "Wait a minute."

He slipped over to Simmons' corner. "Hey," he told the corporal, "he says he'll finish you this round!"

"All right," said Simmons. "He can't do it too soon to suit me. *I* ain't havin' no picnic!"

"He's scared to deat'," Finn told Ethelbert when he returned. "I told him you was goin' to finish him, and it took the heart right out of him!"

Bang! went the tin pan, and the gladiators were at it again.

Ethelbert rushed, and swung. The blow would have been short had not Simmons thrust his jaw out to meet it. The corporal, who was jarred by the punch about as much as the gun cases were by Ethelbert's attack on them, staggered back. He reeled on his feet, rolling his eyes and holding his gloves helplessly by his sides.

"Ethel! Ethel!" screamed Finn. "He's goin'! You got him! One more! Wo-o-ow!" he screeched, as Ethelbert, setting himself carefully, launched out with another blow, one, which, to use an old figure of the prize ring, would not have dented a custard pie.

Simmons shoved his right arm out to break the force of his fall, and dropped. Ethelbert showed every inclination to put the boots to his prostrate adversary, but Lefty O'Neill waved him away. The referee counted ten in about three and one-fifth seconds, and patted Ethelbert on the shoulder.

"You win!" he declared.

Ethelbert immediately did something that sent his stock up a thousand per cent with all who observed. He stripped off his boxing gloves, knelt beside Simmons, and dashed some water in his face. Simmons, who was watching the proceedings through half-closed lids, winced involuntarily as the shower struck him and affected to be revived a little. He turned his head, blinked his eyes and, with a tone surprisingly loud and distinct for a man who had just been knocked out, inquired:

"Where am I at?"

"That's all right, old man," soothed Ethelbert, with the generosity which it is etiquette for the conquering hero always to show. He lifted Simmons' head, and the corporal, who was cold and uncomfortable on the floor, decided not to prolong the farce longer and got up.

Simmons went through the motions of permitting the others to aid him back to the barracks as the party, headed by the strutting Ethelbert, marched to quarters.

Now, Lieutenant Brice was perfectly correct when he predicted that a victory over Simmons would have a "psychological" effect on Ethelbert. It did—and then some! The corporal summed up the situation tersely and succinctly to the lieutenant a few days later.

"Why, sir," he said, "the fool thinks he can lick Willard!"

"Probably," smiled the lieutenant, "but, by the same token, he also thinks he can lick any Boche he encounters when he gets on the other side."

"Not if he tries to add to his record here, he won't!" declared the corporal positively.

"How so?"

"Why, he can fight about as good as my kid brother—and I ain't got one! The first guy he gets flossy with will knock him out of his leggings!"

"Maybe. But the main point at issue is that he's a better soldier than he used to be. And your mention of Willard brings to mind a similarity between him and Kyle."

"Kyle and *Willard?*" questioned Simmons, amazed.

"Yes. Willard's principal object in life seems to be resting on his laurels.

I think Kyle is like that, too. He's not a fighter by nature, and he'll be perfectly content to live on the reputation his victory over you will give him, without seeking to extend his record of knock-outs further."

Which is exactly what happened. Ethelbert was even more coy than the heavyweight champion about reaching a point where actual physical combat with somebody was necessary, which, students of the sporting pages will know, is about the last word in coyness. He swelled and strutted around the camp, letting those who were impressed by the report—his own, of course; nobody else mentioned it—of his victory over Simmons be as much impressed as they pleased, but seeking no new victims among the more skeptical.

Of all concerned in the episode of the gun shed, Corporal Simmons seemed the only sufferer—and it is not the physical effect of Ethelbert's light punches that is referred to. As the news that he had been licked by a person no more robust than Ethelbert was noised around the barracks, Simmons began to lose caste. Men, who, if they hadn't respected his chevrons to any great extent, had feared Simmons' strong arm and his reputation of being a fighter, became openly surly to him. The popularity which he had won by his squareness, his devotion to duty and his upright conduct began to wane. It it a remarkable tribute to the big corporal's character and soldierly habit of unquestioning obedience that he took all of this, if not with equanimity, at least without resentment. Lieutenant Brice had ordered him to let Kyle lick him—he had done it, and, now, as a good soldier, it was his duty to stand the consequences.

Lefty O'Neill, Micky Finn and the others who knew the true story of Ethelbert's "victory," though, boiled with anger at their pal's predicament, and only the remarkable influence the corporal exerted over them prevented them from defending Simmons' reputation and standing with their fists.

But Simmons would not let them raise a hand—or even their voices—in his defense.

"You guys play deaf, dumb, and crippled!" he ordered. "I know all about Kyle, and all about myself. *I'm* satisfied with the way things are—and that's enough."

But it was too much to ask of human nature to keep the story forever from the rest of the company. O'Neill and the rest, while excellent fellows, were not so steadfast as Simmons, which is why Lefty one day punched a comrade expertly on the jaw, and as he lay at his feet, told him and such others as were near by:

"You're a fool! If you wasn't, you'd *know* Kyle never beat Pete on the level. It was a frame-up—Pete laid down. He——"

Too late did Lefty realize what his anger had led him to disclose. He said no more, and walked away; but the harm was done. The story was all over the barracks by evening, and Ethelbert heard it with the rest, heard it from his bunkie as the company lolled off in comfort after evening mess.

"What!" shrieked Ethelbert leaping to his feet. "The big stiff is alibying himself by sayin' he laid down to me! I'll show him!"

He hurried up to Simmons' bunk, where he found the corporal writing a letter.

"Say, you big dub!" he shouted in a voice that rang through the squad room, and caused members of Company M to cluster around Simmons' bunk like flies. "Say, you big dub! Have you been tellin' people I didn't lick you on the level?"

"Go on—go to bed!" said Simmons, looking up from his letter.

"Did you?" Ethelbert insisted.

"Get out of here," warned Simmons, "or——"

"Or *what?*" Ethelbert interrupted in an insulting way that seemed to say, "you know you can't bluff me; *I* can lick you!"

"Or nothin'," said Simmons. His interpretation of his bargain with Lieutenant Brice was that, being licked by Ethelbert meant staying licked, too.

"Yah!" Ethelbert jeered. "I thought so! Ain't that proof enough for you?" he demanded of his bunkie, referring, of course, to the meek way Simmons had "taken water." "Let me tell you somethin'," he said, facing Simmons again, "I licked you—and you know it! If you wasn't a big false alarm, you'd have took your beatin' without tryin' to lie out of it! That's what you are," he declared, noticing how large his audience had grown and wishing to settle this thing, once and for all, "a liar! A dirty liar!" He saw nothing but approving glances as he gazed around.

Simmons was looking at Ethelbert with a queer expression on his heavy features. He hadn't bargained for this. He hadn't expected that he'd be forced to permit Ethelbert to insult him without retaliation in front of almost the whole company. His natural inclination was to jump up and settle Ethelbert with one well-directed punch—but there was the promise he had made to Lieutenant Brice!

Simmons' inaction and the murmur of applause he heard from his comrades encouraged Ethelbert to continue his tirade.

"You're not only a liar!" he shouted, shaking his finger at Simmons. "You're a coward! You're afraid of me! If you ain't, why don't you do somethin'?"

For Simmons the situation was becoming desperate. He didn't want to fight Ethelbert—if a serious physical encounter with that youth could be dignified by the name of fight. Still, all his manhood rebelled against letting himself be branded a liar and a coward in public. Slowly, he put down his writing pad.

The trusty four who had been on the inside of the previous "fight" were holding a council of war. Lefty O'Neill, who was heartbroken at uttering the hasty words that had precipitated the present affair, was keeping the others—all of whom wanted to jump up and tell the company the truth—in check.

"Let Pete settle it himself!" he whispered. "You know you promised him you'd never tell."

"But see what you done!" objected Joe Smith.

"I know," admitted O'Neill, "but I done it without thinkin'—you guys are bein' warned!"

"I weesh See-mone he pooncha heem in da jaw!" vowed Tony Moretti.

Micky Finn was silent. Also, he was thinking—which was unusual. Suddenly a flash of joy illuminated his face. "Say!" he announced in a rasping whisper. "You guys can't talk—but I *can!*"

And, before O'Neill could prevent it, Finn leaped to his feet, made a megaphone of his hands and shouted at Ethelbert:

"Hit him, Ethel! You got the Indian sign on him! Prove you licked him—right here!"

Ethelbert responded to this as a spirited horse would to a blow from a whip. He turned to address the company at large.

"*He* knows!" he asserted, indicating Finn. "*He* was my second! Watch!" he bade, and he strode forward and slapped Simmons across the face.

A gasp and a buzz of excitement went up from the assembled men of the company. Simmons went white—except for the one red streak that marked where Ethelbert had laid his hand. He trembled as he got slowly to his feet. From his pocket he drew a key, which he inserted in the military clothes locker which lay beneath his bunk. The men of the company watched in wonder. Simmons rummaged through the clothing; then he drew something out and held it aloft.

"Here," he said, "is a hundred bucks. If any of you think Kyle can lick me, any part of this dough says I can stand out there on the floor, not punch him once—and that he can't hit me on the nose! Come on, you sports!" he challenged.

Nobody took him up.

"All right," said Simmons. He tossed the bundle of bank notes to Lefty O'Neill. "Hold on to that," he said.

Then he strode out to Ethelbert.

"Come on, you!" he ordered. "Hit me!"

Filled with the confidence his previous "victory" had given him, Ethelbert shot out his right fist. Simmons' head dropped a couple of inches to one side, and the punch missed him clean. Ethelbert had put all he had into the blow, and he lost his balance when it failed to land. As Ethelbert tried to recover himself, Simmons pushed out his right hand; and the big palm, fingers extended, covered the other's face. When Ethelbert, getting his balance again, tried to rush, Simmons just straightened out his arm. Back went Ethelbert. Holding the other at arm's length, and grinning at Ethelbert's vicious but futile attempts to get close enough to punch him, Simmons announced:

"Lefty still has the century. Anybody want any of it?"

The only reply was a gale of laughter. The men of the company were standing, sitting, kneeling five and six deep on the near-by bunks, the better to watch the strange spectacle of a man who had been knocked out, easily—almost contemptuously—holding off his reported conqueror with one hand while he reached into the hip pocket of his breeches with the other and took out a cigarette!

Simmons placed the cigarette between his lips, and looked around him.

"Who's got a match?" he asked.

Somebody on the top of one of the bunks behind Ethelbert produced one.

"Wait a minute," said Simmons; "I'll be right with you!"

He pushed Ethelbert, still punching, kicking and fuming, before him until he stood beneath the man with the match. Then, because it was more convenient to do it that way, Simmons shifted his left hand to Ethelbert's face, and reached up for the match with his right.

"Hey, I'm tired holding you!" he announced to Ethelbert when he had lighted the cigarette. "Go take a little walk for yourself!" He crooked his elbow slightly, then straightened his arm; and Ethelbert shot ten feet down the aisle between the bunks.

Simmons turned, and walked serenely away as the thrust of his muscular arm catapulted Ethelbert down the squad room. That young man, franctically endeavoring to hold his feet, fetched up against a bunk. He seemed to disregard the pain he must have felt as his back struck the iron post, and, mad with fury, he returned to the attack. Cries of warning to Simmons arose as Ethelbert dashed down the aisle.

The corporal let Ethelbert come to within about a foot of him; then he leaped lightly aside between two bunks. Ethelbert tried to stop as he saw Simmons melt out of his path, but only contrived to get his feet tangled up and fall heavily to the floor.

"Some Kellermann!" somebody shouted. "Hey, Ethel, you ain't no fighter—you're a diver!"

Ethelbert got to his feet, and plunged in between the bunks after Simmons. The corporal again thrust out that long right arm, and the great paw once more covered Ethelbert's face. Ethelbert tried to duck under it, but Simmons anticipated his every move, and, whichever way he turned, the outstretched arm kept him away.

If there is anything more ridiculous than an angry man, punching away at a stronger opponent, who holds him at arm's length in a careless, effortless way, refusing even to pay him the compliment of making a swing at him, it has yet to be discovered.

Ethelbert was tiring. His punches at Simmons were becoming more infrequent. He was out of breath and badly shaken from striking the bunk post and from his fall to the floor. Slowly, as his blind fury ebbed out, his brain cleared; and there came to him a realization that something was wrong—Simmons, who had stamped himself an easy mark in their previous encounter, now appeared to combine a lightning swiftness of movement with the unyielding strength of a steel column. Ethelbert began to hear the derisive shouts and the laughter of his comrades. He felt weak, and a queer

emotion, with something in it of shame, something of disgust with himself, was rising through him. To his astonishment he found out that he didn't want to punch Simmons. The corporal seemed to invite his attack about as much as a brick wall would. He didn't fear Simmons exactly; he seemed to respect him rather and envy him his bulk, and the good-tempered, smiling, efficient way he defended himself without resorting to retaliatory measures. He dropped his hands and gazed at Simmons, who immediately took his hand from Ethelbert's face. When Ethelbert spoke there was a note of pleading in his voice.

"Ain't you goin' to *hit* me?" he asked, as though a blow from the corporal's fist would be a boon—something that would bring back the self-respect he was losing so fast.

Simmons looked at him and grinned. It was almost a friendly grin, and in it was no derision, nor the consciousness of superiority the corporal could rightfully have shown. "Do you think I *could?*" he asked.

"I know *damn well* you could!" responded Ethelbert fervently.

Simmons looked about him. The eager, interested faces of his comrades were gazing at him from all sides over the tops of bunks. "Do you guys think I could?" he asked the company generally.

Nobody answered. Nobody ever does when a direct question like that is hurled at a crowd.

"Could I?" Simmons repeated.

Some unidentified person in the background mustered up courage enough to give vent to a vigorous and emphatic:

"You bet your life you could!"

The cry swelled into an unintelligible roar as dozens of others uttered this and similar sentiments.

"All right, then," said Simmons, as the rumbling of the voices died, "I guess everybody's satisfied. Come here, bub!" he directed Ethelbert, holding out his hand.

Ethelbert was astonished to find himself obeying the order. He took the big hand, which, such a short time before, was threatening to flatten his nose against his face.

He looked questioningly at Ethelbert, who said nothing, but strengthened the grip in which he held the corporal's hand.

"Let's go down to the canteen—and drink some pop!" said Simmons.

It wasn't until the shielding darkness had swallowed some of Ethelbert's jumble of emotions that that youth found words to speak. Then:

"Er—Pete," he began, "what I'm wonderin' about is how I licked you that night."

"Oh," Simmons chuckled, "that was—that was"—he searched in some remote crevice of his brain for a word he had heard Lieutenant Brice use—"that was s-s-spikeology!" he announced, making a reckless stab.

"What's that?" asked Ethelbert.

"Search me!" said Simmons, linking arms with his companion. "But it's all right!"

Raymond Brown will have another fine training-camp story in the POPULAR *for August 20th. It is entitled "The Sight of Blood."*

NOTHING TO PUT ON AIRS ABOUT

ONE of Chicago's most famous physicians was conversing in a club one afternoon with a much younger member of the medical profession. The young man brought up the subject of veterinarians. "The idea of their calling themselves doctors!" he exploded. "It's an insult to our profession and all its ideals and traditions."

"Oh, I don't know," said the great man. "The only difference between us and horse doctors is in clientele."

Good-By and Good Luck

By Clyde A. Bruckman

Author of "Under His Hat," "Not According to Hoyle," Etc.

Ringing in a woman on a ball club is inviting the worst. Nature never intended them to mix. Ignoring all experience, Bill Williams tries the impossible

I GUESS by this time Bill Williams will admit that I was right when I said baseball and romance mix like hard liquor and a weak stomach or dynamite and shocks. They's some things like coffee and doughnuts and wives and expenses that go together, but baseball and love affairs—never!

Any sap in a number six hat knows that ringing in a woman on a ball club is like standing up and giving three cheers for the kaiser in an army training camp filled with good American doughboys—plain murder. But Bill was so bright above the collar he wouldn't listen to me; he just blundered along on his own judgment, which is like running an auto without a steering knuckle. Now that the crash is with us, he can hang his hat on the ground and listen to me say "I told you so" for the next six months.

Anybody that ain't muscle bound between the ears knows what happens when a guy steps out of his class. Right now they's a million tombstones waving over the graves of suckers that was patted down under the sod and dew because they thought they could get away with more than their share of the works. I might head the list with them well-known examples: Eve, Mark Antony and Napoleon.

Now in the first place, Bill Williams was a baseball manager. He was and still is the big squeeze of the Panthers in the American League. Bill was born to play ball and to make other birds do likewise. Nature never intended that Bill should set in for Cupid at no time.

Speaking from a baseball standpoint, they ain't a smarter manager in the game, all things considered. For a bird who has just sneaked over the thirty-year mark Bill is a wise gazabo. He is supposed to have something under his hat besides brown hair. If you wrote down on paper all Bill don't know about baseball it wouldn't make no more reading matter than a list of the breweries in Maine.

All this trouble I'm raving about came off last year, and at that time the papers referred to Bill Williams as a 1920 manager in a 1917 season. He had the goods and delivered them. Among the ball players Bill had the reputation of being a regular guy. You could look at him without going into a slump or wearing smoke glasses. He didn't have nothing to do with voting Kansas dry, all the language he uses ain't found in the dictionary, and he knows which end of a cigar to light.

Bill succeeded as a manager because he was a good mixer and regular folks. When he took over the Panthers he was handed the toughest legacy in baseball. The Panthers at that time were as rough and tough as their name implies. They fought among themselves, and was so busy with internal feuds they didn't have time to battle the other clubs in the league. Discord was thicker than base hits, and naturally the club stuck in the cellar defying the whole world to drag it forth from that place.

Bill stepped into this feud factory and went to work. It wasn't no time at all before he had more harmony on his ball club than Sousa ever had in his band. It was art. Bill was a stu-

dent of human nature. He picked the flaws in each bird's make-up and worked on it. Inside of a month he had the boys out on the ball field pulling for each other and winning ball games.

I'll tell the whole world and the Central Powers that Bill could handle an infield made up of wild cats. He could talk the kaiser into trading Berlin for Peoria, Illinois. That's the kind of a guy Bill is.

The old boy went along that way, patching up quarrels and holes in the line-up, and having all-around good luck until Jake Hawkins hit camp last spring. It turned out that Hawkins was harder to handle than a bunt or a porcupine. Bill tried all the old remedies on Jake, but they didn't have no more effect on him than near beer would have on a Tennessee mountaineer. Then, as a last resort, Bill tried the romance stuff, and right there he skulled.

They ain't one single alibi he can make with me, because I warned him at the start. Bill simply put his head under his arm and ran hog wild into the mess. He went out of his class, and he can do all his moaning internally, because I ain't going to listen to him. His brain waves won him a world's series, but I know darn well that way down in his heart Bill don't think it was worth the price.

The first time I saw Jake Hawkins was when he stepped out of the hotel bus at the training camp last spring. At first sight, I thought he was a press agent for a dye works or the hang-over from a drunken dream. He wore a lot of funny clothes that was built with but one general idea—to be loud. His make-up was noisier than a speed contest in soup eating. He had on one of them artist's ties that look like a roller towel, and a shirt that would make a rainbow look like a piece of crape. His hair was the color that stops railroad trains and his teeth was as prominent as a senator in his own home town. All things considered, he wasn't such a bad-looking slob if you saw him outdoors at night.

Jake Hawkins was born in Texas, which is a fact that ain't included in the chamber-of-commerce circulars from that State. He takes after Texas in the matter of size, being built along the general lines of a union depot, wearing a circus tent for a shirt and a sweater for a mitten. He had a hand like an engine pilot and feet that left an imprint like somebody had just hauled away a bungalow.

He came slouching up to the hotel door where I was standing giving him a lingering look and thinking he would pass for Jess Willard's father if he was a little older.

"Say!" he gurgles in a whisky-baritone voice. "Where can I find Bill Williams, manager of the Panthers?"

"You might find him if you're good at lookin' for things," I says. "Ball player?"

"Yep!" he says. "My name is Jake Hawkins." Then he stepped back and waited for me to drop dead with surprise. Somehow, I managed to stagger through the shock and keep my feet.

"Where'd you play ball?" I asks.

"What!" he howls. "Say, everybody in the world has heard of me."

"Everybody but me," I says. "I'm the lone, poor, uneducated simp that ain't never heard about you."

"I won eighteen straight games in the Texas league last season," he says.

"Rotation pool or cassino?" I asks.

"Baseball, nuts!" he says.

"Any time you call me names you're flirtin' with death," I says.

"I'll take a chance," says Hawkins, and after looking him over again I decided to let him live.

I led Hawkins into the hotel lobby where Bill Williams was leaning against the desk picking the remnants of his ham and eggs out of his teeth.

"Here's Matty's successor," I says. "Bill, meet Mr. Jake Hawkins of Texas!"

"Glad to know you!" says Bill.

"Haw!" says Jake.

"I'll have mine straight," says Bill. "Pitcher, ain't you?"

"Yep!" says Hawkins. "A pitchin' fool."

"Why add the pitchin'?" I asks.

"You better shut up while you're all in one piece," says Hawkins.

"Pretty heavy, ain't you?" asks Bill.

"Nope!" says Jake. "I'm naturally pretty big and thick."

"Especially in the head," I says.

"Man, you're awful careless with your health," says Jake.

"What have you got?" I asks.

"Say, I got a curve ball that is crookeder than a bent corkscrew," says Jake. "I got more curves than Annette Kellermann, and I'm fast. My control is so good I can hit a guy in the eye every time sixty feet away."

"I guess you don't have no trouble hittin' a bottle of beer once in a whue," I says.

"Say, I'm goin' to sweep out this lobby in a minute," says Jake; "and they's one piece of rubbish I ain't goin' to overlook."

"How's your arm?" asks Bill.

"Great!" says Jake. "I only lost seven games last season, and I blew them because the guys behind me was tryin' to see who could make the most errors in a nine-innin' game. And you can believe me, I would've hit .280 only I had the mumps."

"Well," says Bill, "we'll take you out to the grounds with us to-day and look you over. If you're as good a pitcher as you are a press agent, we'll be able to use you."

On the way out to the park that morning Bill came to me and says:

"I'm goin' to put you in charge of some of the young pitchers from the mulberries. I want you to keep an eagle eye on this egg, Hawkins. He may or may not be the goods, but we can't afford to overlook any bets. He'll probably try to throw his arm away the first time he warms up, so handle him with gloves. He looks to me as though his head is as empty as the Russian treasury, but we'll give him a try, anyhow."

"Leave it to me," I says.

When we walked into the park an hour later we found Jake Hawkins among those present. He was sprawled out full length on the ground in the shade of the stands, fanning himself with his cap—a picture of pepper and ambition.

"Holy sufferin' cats!" bellows Bill. "Look at Kid Ambish on the job. What's the big idea, simple?"

"I'm tired from that trip on the train," says Hawkins.

"You must be," says Bill. "You're so frail. I got a little rubber shirt here that will help remove that tired feelin'. Now as long as you're on my ball club I want you to——"

I walked away while Bill was delivering a free-hand lecture on hard work and other painful subjects. I had a hunch right there that Kid Hawkins was going to be the Joe Gum of our ball club if he ever lasted long enough to be counted in.

"Who's the Hercules?" asks Butch Hawley, our shortstop.

"Jake Hawkins, the guy who invented rest and leisure," I says. "He's goin' to pitch us into a pennant this season; he told me so himself."

"One of them wise eggs," says Butch.

"Yeah," I says. "He thinks the bark of a tree is the sound it makes when the wind whistles through the branches. He don't look to me to have any more brains than Adam had dress suits. His face is as open as a ball yard."

"Why pan the guy?" asks Red Miller, the first sacker.

"I got to handle him, so I guess it's my show," I says. "It's up to me to make a curly wolf out of this sap."

During the first week, we kept Jake busy making a fuss with his feet around the park. After he ran some of the spare weight off, I took him in hand and let him pitch to me, working up gradually until he could cut loose.

The big zob did have a swell delivery. He was free and easy in his motions and pitched with a full sweep that gave him a lot of power behind every ball. Like most young birds with a lot of zip, he was wild. If you locked him in a room he couldn't hit the floor.

"How's he look?" asks Bill one day as he stopped where I was catching several dubs with Hawkins in the bunch.

"Hang around and take a keen glance

at his fast one," I says. "Stand well back from the firin' zone because he kinda pitches at random."

Jake saw Bill hanging around and he immediately shifted into high. The ball came busting down the slot like a French .75, and I was nearly knocked out of the park.

"Have an idea," I says.

"Sweet cookies, he's fast!" says Bill.

"Quit spillin' secrets," I says.

"What else has he got?" asks Bill.

"One a little faster," I says.

"How's his curve?"

"On a vacation."

"Has he got a slow one?" asks Bill.

"Yeah," I says; "but that's home in his trunk along with his ambish."

"We'll have to show this simp a few things," says Bill.

"I been tryin' to for a week," I says. "He thinks a slow ball is somethin' like sloe gin. I asks him yesterday if he had a spitter and he says no, but that he has a fox terrier. He don't know no more about pitchin' than I do about cuttin' hair."

"How about his control?" asks Bill.

"He's got good control of his temper and his pepper," I says; "but that lets him out. He ain't a guy that will throw any fits of energy. A man with his pep ought to be an aviator in the Mexican army."

"I'll get Pop Lindner to show him a few things," says Bill.

"Listen," I says. "They ain't no more chance to teach this tramp anythin' than they is for Rockefeller to be sued for a board bill. You can tell by lookin' at him that he don't know anythin'. His face started the war."

"It won't hurt to swing," says Bill. "That's the only way you'll get hits."

The next day Bill put Jake under Pop Lindner's care. Pop was pitching before Socrates ever wore a sock, and he knows more about pitching than the Russians do about retreating. Pop had a curve ball as good as the one Red Ames owned in his prime, which is saying something in capital letters. Pop worked with Hawkins for an hour, giving the big sap the whole works; but what did Jake do but sit down, lean against the stands, and do everything but show interest in what Pop was tellin' him. Finally Pop gave it up in disgust.

"I'm quits," says Pop. "It would be easier to teach a piece of lead how to swim."

"What's wrong?" asks Bill.

"His head," says Pop. "He'd make one of the swellest pitchers in the business if he'd have some of the fat shaved off his dome. When they made him they put the foundation on top. He's got the old jazz ball, but he's about as full of pep as the average bum is with champagne."

"He's afflicted with a severe attack of too much dough," says Bill. "He came into a big hunk of land in Texas which makes him independent. He told me the other day he plays ball simply because he likes to be around with a gang of fellows havin' a good time. Life with him is just one long joy ride. He says it's too dead on the ranch, and that they's no place he can have a better time than he can on a ball club. He's lazy by nature and he don't pay any more attention to what you tell him than Germany would to a protest from the Iceland secretary of war. What can you do with a guy like that?"

"Hang the tinware on him," I says.

"But I hate to give him up," says Bill. "The big slob will make our pitchin' staff if I could find some way to make him hustle."

In the exhibish games on the way home from the training camp Hawkins got his chance to work the same as the rest of the pitchers. He stepped into the box and did nothing but wheel his fast one somewhere around the plate. He was just wild enough to make the hitters stand up there with one foot free. Say, they didn't have no more chance to beat him than they is for the U. S. A. to adopt "The Watch on the Rhine" for its national anthem.

"I think he's gettin' better," says Bill one day.

"Has he been sick?" I asks.

"Well, he's certainly made the enemy throw away their bats in the exhibish games," says Bill.

"Yeah," I says. "Yesterday when he was workin' I kept givin' him the sign for a curve ball and a slow one, and all I got was his fast one. I guess he don't believe in signs. If he ever sticks his nose in a game in the big show with nothin' but that fast ball, you want to have the big boss put signs around the park saying that infielders playin' on this ball field do so at their own risk. I'm tellin' you!"

"Mebbe so," says Bill.

Two weeks after the season opened we met Washington, and we had to face Johnson, which is just another way of saying that most of the boys was up four times with o. At that, we had a pretty good day, touching Walter for nine fouls, two flies, a few grounders, and a walk. He hit my bat with a fast one in the third inning and the ball dropped in back of the third sacker for our one hit. The rest of the time the boys was up there imitating them doors they have in front of saloons.

Bill figured they wasn't no use of wasting a pitcher against Johnson, so he sent Hawkins in for his first crack at a big-league ball club. Some people claim it is libel to call the Washington outfit a big-league club, but they was for that one day at least.

If they was any place in that ball park that our outfielders didn't go that afternoon it must've been on top of the flagpole. Pep Jones in center was busier than a one-armed conductor on an excursion train. Every time I looked up the bases was loaded, and the papers didn't say nothing about any of them Washington runners dying on the sacks. At the end of a perfect day we was the proud owner of a new league record: The worst shut-out beating in history.

To make it real good, Bill left Jake in all the way. The game was gone after the third frame and they wasn't no use to make a change then. Johnson stuck to the finish because it was a grand chance for him to get in shape. When the big slam was over, we drifted into the clubhouse and there was Jake humming a popular tune.

"Well, another day, another dollar," says Jake.

"You're a fine tramp," says Bill. "You wasn't puttin' nothin' on the ball."

"No, but the Washington guys did," says Jake.

"You seem to think a bunt is a mixed drink or somethin'," I says. "Why don't you get off that dime out there and go after some of them balls when they dump one? I ain't no motor cycle, you know."

"It tires me out to stoop," says Jake.

"You can't expect him to get around very fast out there," says Butch Hawley. "His feet are so big it looks like he's walkin' on his knees all the time. Honest, Jake, I don't see how you're so tall when you're bent under so far as the bottom. And I noticed when you was standin' out on the mound your knees was knockin' each other all the time."

"It means nothin' in my young life," says Jake, and he said an earful. I don't think Jake could even spell the word worry. He was about as serious as a comic section of a Sunday paper.

Bill sent Jake in again a week or so later and this time the big ham did better. In fact, in the ninth round we only needed fourteen runs to tie the game. From that time on Jake was never in the box score except to finish up games that was in the sewer.

"Why fool with him, Bill?" I says. "He's shown that he don't care, that he can't pitch, and that he ain't goin' to try to get any better. I'd slip him the gate."

I was captain of the club, and Bill took my advice once.

"They's a sold-out sign on his head," I says.

"Give him a chance," says Bill.

"I'd like to give him a slam on the nose," I says. "I've handled a lot of simps in my time, but this Hawkins has got 'em all cheated. He don't know any more about pitchin' than Queen Elizabeth did about washin' machines. I might've known it would be this way when I saw him wash his head with ivory polish at the trainin' camp."

"You must've had a bad night," says Bill.

"No, but I've had a lot of bad days

catchin' him," I says. "He's about as good at fieldin' his position as Nero was at rollin' cigarettes. He couldn't pick up a bunt with a steam shovel and when it comes to thinkin' he passes the deal. When he's pitchin', all I got to do is catch and field for him, and think for both of us, and pray that they don't hit one through him."

"He must owe you some money," says Bill.

"Nix," I says. "He thinks he can pitch. I give him credit for that one thought—and that one is wrong. Only his old per cent has kept him from gettin' killed out there. Any guy ought to be lucky when he's built like a horseshoe from the knees on down. If Hawkins and his luck ever go to Reno —habeas corpus! Every boob in the league knows he ain't got nothin' but a fast one, and they just lay back, take a toe hold and swing from Asia. Every time he throws one close enough for them to hit it, I shut my eyes, and when I look up I expect to see one of our infielders laid out in two pieces. It's murder, Bill!"

"Stay inside of your shirt for a few more weeks," says Bill. "I've got a swell idea that may change all this. I've been studyin' Hawkins all spring, and I think I know his weakness. Anyway, I'm goin' to start pitchin' to it and I'll lay a little ten to one that I put my scheme across pretty."

"Just as you say, Bill," I says. "It's your party, you know. While you're about it, you might try to change his habits, too. He's closer than his socks are to his feet. If he was a carpenter he wouldn't loan a guy a nail on the job. He probably bought his ranch on the money he made by bein' shy in the poker pots. Tell him for me to miss a couple drinks and buy a shave. Every time I look out there and see that forest primeval on his chin I think I'm catchin' old John J. Bush."

"You love that guy, don't you?" says Bill.

"Him and rattlesnakes," I says. "I love every muscle in his head."

We was on the road at the time this talk came up, and I never heard no more about Bill's great scheme for several days. The night we landed home Bill came to me and says:

"To-morrow I start workin' on Hawkins. If I don't have him out there breakin' his neck hustlin' inside of two weeks, I'll buy you a fifty-buck suit. I've got a great idea."

"What are you goin' to do, invent an errorless glove?" I asks. "Remember, Bill, every time you think you help ruin the nation."

"No, simple!" says Bill. "My plan will make a world beater out of Hawkins."

"Go on, Aladdin, where's your lamp?" I says.

"On the level, this is deep stuff," says Bill.

"It's got to be to penetrate that egg's hide," I says. "Well, spill the glad tidin's."

"I'm goin' to ring in a girl on this big slob," says Bill.

"James, my hat and coat!" I says. "This is where I pass out. Baseball and women was never meant to be a sandwich. Take a couple of sincere words from little Oscar, and don't do it. Smoke cigarettes in a powder factory, sleep on railroad tracks, and walk along the top of the front-line trenches in a red uniform, but don't try blendin' romance with the old pastime. It ain't the style."

"Wait! Wait!" says Bill. "This particular girl is Mary Morgan."

"Oh!" I says, and that "oh" meant a lot. Bill and Jake and Butch Hawley and I stopped at the Waldamar Hotel when the club was home. It was a quiet little family place fairly close to the ball yard, and seeing that none of us was married it made it pretty nice being together.

Mary Morgan's old man owned the hotel. Mary helped out a little now and then at the desk, and believe me, boys, she was the biggest single boost the place had. You could take one look at her and know that her name was Mary. You knew it because there was just a little bit of old-fashion style in the way she dressed and talked.

She could tell a stove from a motor

car, and she was a whole lot more at home with a needle than she was with a swagger stick.

Perhaps the first time you saw Mary, you would pass her by, because she didn't try to dress like a third-alarm fire. Her clothes cost enough, I guess, but she had that knack of combining style and taste so as to look trim but not loud.

She didn't knock me dead with heart failure the first time I saw her, but from that time on I kept taking a second look. She is one of those girls that seem to grow prettier every day. To my way of thinking she hits about .400 year in and year out in the beauty league, and she had more sense than nine-tenths of the fellows that tried to flirt with her.

There was a general understanding among the boys that Bill had the inside track. We expected any day to have him announce the date, and I'll tell the world there was at least three gents that envied him from the bottom of their hearts.

"Well, what are you thinkin' about?" asks Bill, breaking the silence.

"Mary," I says.

"She's a wonder," says Bill.

"I knew that two years ago," I says.

"And me," says Bill. "I've talked it over with her, and she is willin' to do her bit."

"Well, what's the big idea?" I asks.

"Mary is goin' to make a pitcher out of Jake," says Bill.

"Anybody that can do that can make a rifle out of a watch," I says.

"Oh, I don't know," says Bill. "Have you ever noticed the way Jake watches Mary?"

"Easy!" I says. "That's all he does when he's around the lobby. Even an umpire could see that he's crazy about her."

"There you are," says Bill. "That is Jake's weak spot. Mary can do more with him than anybody. He will listen to her, and I'll bet a year's pay that she can make him get out there and hustle his head off for the club. I told Mary the whole thing this morning. Naturally, she wants us to win out this season, and she will do all she can to help us."

"Does she care anythin' about Jake?" I asks.

"No, except as a friend," says Bill.

"Would it be fair for her to kid Jake into thinkin' she did care?" I asks. "It's pretty tough to think you have a chance and then get called out on a bum decision. I know. That's why I'm still at large."

"She won't," says Bill. "Mary is clever enough to handle this in the right way. She'll keep it on a friendship basis all the way. Leave that to her. She'll go at it from the point of personal interest in the club. She will make it clear to Jake at all times that she is taking this interest in him because he is her friend, and that she would do as much for any other friend."

"I'll say she would!"

"Well, what do you think of the plan?" asks Bill.

"If it was any other girl, I'd say no," I says; "but with Mary it is a little different. Still, I maintain it's a bad policy to mix any women with baseball. You know Mary better than I do. I've been expectin' any day to have you ask me to be your best man."

"Not yet," says Bill, turning red. "I ain't even asked her. I want to be pretty well fixed before I do."

"No brains!" I says. "Do you suppose it would make any difference to Mary if she cared?"

"No," admits Bill. "But it does to me."

"You're crazy if you don't ask her right away," I says. "They ain't any more like her in stock. Your plan may be all right, but deal me out. I'm against it even with Mary."

"You're always lookin' on the rough side of the board," says Bill. "You and gloom are twins."

The next week brought out several developments. In the first place Jake and Mary spent a lot of time around the hotel in the mornings and evenings talking to each other. You could see that Jake was absorbing every wo-d she said.

The second surprise came several days later when Jake walked up to me on the field and says:

"Radon, I want to learn to pitch."

"I thought you told me you invented pitchin'," I says.

"I thought so too for a while," he says with a grin. "I'm just gettin' hep to myself, and I'm on the level when I say I want to learn somethin'."

Pop was in on the scheme, so I got him and we went to work with Jake. That was in May. Naturally it took time to make a pitcher out of Hawkins. Pop always will swear that the kid had a curve ball all the time, but wouldn't use it.

"Nobody could pick up a curve ball like he did in a month unless he had it in his arm," says Pop. "He's got a pretty fair slow one, but of course it will take him time to get control of it. His control has improved a lot since he started takin' off some of the fat. I was tellin' Bill yesterday that Jake could go in now and win half his games durin' the rest of the season."

But Bill kept Jake on the bench. There was a method in doing so, believe me. Jake went to Bill every day and asked for a chance to pitch.

"I might as well forfeit the game," Bill would say. "You ain't ready yet."

"But I've picked up a curve ball," Jake would say.

"Learn to pick up a bunt and then I'll listen to reason," Bill would answer, and Jake would walk away raving. Each time Bill stalled him off Jake would go out and work a little harder. He was in a high-and-low game all the time, and he made me go out to the park with him early in the mornings and bunt to him while he stood out on the mound. It was hard work but I could see the kid improving day by day. Along in July Jake came to Bill one day with his usual request for a chance to pitch.

"If you'll let me in there to-day I'll make them stiffs think they left their battin' averages out in the rain where they shrunk," says Jake. "They'll get about as many hits off me as they is battleships in the Eskimo navy. What do you say?"

"I'd rather lose a ball game than to have to hear you rave all afternoon," says Bill. "Go in and pitch, and if you lose, I'll ship you so far into the sticks it will cost you a thousand bucks to telegraph to the nearest railroad station. Get me!"

"Easy," says Jake. "I ain't goin' to lose."

Jake went in there that afternoon, and I never worked with a bird that had more stuff. He was slipping his fast one through the slot, and it was sailing for him. He got his curve over and dropped in a few slow ones for good luck. Did he win? He did not.

We was playing Cleveland, and judging from the way that club went against Jake that afternoon Cleveland must be the manufacturing center for luck, horseshoes, and four-leaf clovers. I never saw nothing like it.

They was some stiff pitching for them that got stewed every time he went on a winning streak and captured one consecutive game. They wasn't any more on his fast ball than they is on a chorus girl. He just wound up and threw.

Any time our guys crashed one to deep short or across second, where they was a chance to beat it out, it would look like they was packing their trunks with 'em to first base, and they'd be throwed out a mile. I stood behind the plate and kept heaving two-base hits into the outfield every time one of them Cleveland guys started to steal a base.

Any time we managed to luck a guy to first base the next two or three saps would act like they was a thousand-dollar reward for the boob that could hit the most pop flies during the game. We didn't have no more chance of finding the plate for a run than a souse would have to find the exit of a labyrinth. It got so bad that even the Cleveland guy's line drives was taking bad hops in the air and missing our gloves.

I think Jake allowed five hits and walked two, and the final score is 6 to 0

against him. Our error column looked like a list of casualties from the Picardy battle front. Every time one of them Cleveland eggs got on, we'd kick the apple around until he was in.

It was plain out-and-out murder. Jake was the victim of a conspiracy between Hard Luck and Fate, take it from me. He showed a world of stuff and fielded his position swell. He hounded them bunts and was like a snake in the grass going after smashes through the box. Another thing he had was the old pepper and ambish. He was up and going all the time and crabbing from round one to the finish.

"This ball club is the cheese," howls Jake as he tramped into the clubhouse after the game. "Here I was out there all afternoon making them guys swing and hit the same thing that fills the holes in Swiss cheese, and what do I get? I get the old raspberry."

"You wasn't half tryin'," says Butch Hawley.

"So!" says Jake. "Well, I wasn't around the plate looking in my cap like a motorman to see if I was due for a hit. All you stiffs go up there to the plate and take champagne swings with a beer heart. No wonder a pitcher on this ball club ain't got no chance to win."

"Drop another nickel," says Butch.

"I'll drop you if you don't lay off," says Jake.

"Go get a shave and mebbe you'll win one," says Butch. "You look like an Airedale."

"I'll comb your hair with a cuspidor if you don't put on the muffler," says Jake, and that busted up the argument.

Bill was all swelled up with his success.

"I guess old John J. Scheme isn't workin' or nothin' like that," says Bill on the way in from the ball yard. "Did you hear him ravin' like he's off his dip. I guess not! The old boy is gettin' so he takes an interest in his work. Any time a bird starts moanin' around about his ball game he's tryin'."

"Nobody ever had any more stuff than Jake showed me to-day," I says.

"He'll knock the boys cock-eyed next year," says Bill. "Oh, Oscar!"

But Bill didn't have to wait until next year to see Jake knock the boys off. Jake started working at his trade the next time out, setting the Yanks down 3 to 0 with four hits that was widely assorted. From that place Jake went. They wasn't no stopping him after that. It got so he thought he was having a bad day any time the enemy hocked their swings for more than four hits.

Just about this time, old Pop Lindner and the rest of our pitchers went nuts, and the first thing we knew we was in first place and nobody could do anything about it. The home folks started dropping dead with heart trouble, and column writers said the standings was being published upside down.

I'll admit the sensation of being any place but in the cellar was new to us, but we took our honors with ease. We went out and gathered ourselves five or six runs a day while Jake and Pop and the rest of the boys was heaving shut-out ball. Somewhere along in the latter part of September we hog-tied the pennant and set ourselves right square into the middle of the world's series.

"All the credit belongs to you, Mary," says Bill one night in the hotel. "You made Jake come to life and that won us the pennant."

"You are too kind, Billy," says Mary. "It was your plan; all I did was carry out instructions."

"Yeah," says Bill; "but look how well you did the job. Any boob can give instructions but it takes a real big leaguer to put the works over. Jake is one of the best pitchers in the business right now, and he's just gettin' started."

"Do you think so?" asks Mary.

"I'm goin' to work him in the opener of the big series," says Bill. "He'll mop up, too."

"I sure hope so," says Mary.

We stepped into the big series full of fight and jazz. We were at the top of a big winning streak and we knew nothing could stop us. Jake worked the first game on the enemy's field, and

they got about as many hits off him as they is U-boats in Lake Michigan.

Jake just naturally made 'em like it. They looked like suckers on his curve ball, and his fast one was sailing away from 'em so's they couldn't even foul it. While Jake was making the enemy look silly, we was taking their pitchers apart to see what made 'em tick. The final count stood 9 to 1, and we didn't have the one.

Pop Lindner crowned them again in the second game, and we came home to make it four in a row. Right there the works was gummed. Spike Larson stepped in for the third game, and the National Leaguers stepped on Spike. We never came within waving distance of the lead.

We kept staggering around the next day, and Jake was smeared under 3 to 2. And the first thing we knew we was even up. Then Pop dragged in a game and Mooney blew one, and it was three all. The seventh game came off in our own little bull ring with Jake doing the pitching against Root.

I suppose it would be nice to say that they battled one to one until the fifty-first inning, when the enemy scored a run. With two down in our half, Handsome Jake Hawkins hit a drive over the fence and ran around the bases twice scoring two runs and giving us the game. It was not so.

In the first round we scored no less than six runs. We scored a lot more after that, and could've made it a cool thousand if we hadn't weakened. The game wound up with us out in front 15 to 2, the two being made when Jake eased up in the eighth and ninth.

We made quite a fuss over Jake in the clubhouse after the game. He was mighty pleased, and blustered out a few words that was meant for thanks. After the clubhouse riot was over and we had dressed, Bill and I wandered out and headed for the hotel.

"Nothin' to do until 1918," I says.

"Nothin' she be," says Bill. "I won't have much trouble diggin' up a real ball club next season. With Jake pitchin' the way he has lately, we will have the best pitchin' staff in the league. He could've blanked 'em to-day."

"Easy," I says. "They looked like they was handcuffed up there at the plate."

"That little scheme of mine solved the whole thing," says Bill. "I guess you'll have to hand it to old Bill. Romance and baseball don't mix so bad after all."

"I guess I can spring the big question now," says Bill. "This winner's end of the dough in the series won't come in bad a-tall. I guess I can go from here, eh?"

We shuffled into the hotel and walked up to the desk where Mary's father was counting some change. He looked up and smiled as we came in.

"I just got back from the park," he says. "Great stuff!"

"Where's Mary?" asks Bill.

"Mary is out just now," says the old man. "By the way, here is a note from Jake. He told me to hand it to you when you came in."

"Thanks!" says Bill. "Just a minute, Buddy, until I see what Jake has to say."

I leaned against the counter reading the reports of the game in the evening papers. I was in the middle of a big boost for Jake when Bill tore loose.

"Well, I'll be damned!" howls Bill, and then he trailed off into a lot of language that I ain't goin' to try to repeat here.

"Somebody protest the game?" I asks.

"No," snaps Bill. "Read this." He passed the note to me. It read:

BILL: I don't know just how to go about writing this note. You see, Bill, Mary and I was married this morning. I guess it was love at first sight, Bill. Mary says you will understand. By the time you get this note we will be on our way to my ranch back home. Don't count on me for next year. Mary wants a real home, and a ball player can't give her that, so it looks like quits for me. I hate to leave the club, Bill, but Mary is worth it. She sends her best. Good-by, and good luck! JAKE.

"Good-by, and good luck is right," says Bill, and I didn't even have the heart to say "I told you so."

Who would?

The Lost Mariana

By Michael Williams

Men have trekked to the ends of the earth for singular objects, but not many of them have gone to the expense and trouble of outfitting a ship and crew to go after the picture of a lady. Such is the case in this romance. But the portrait is a very choice one—a masterpiece from the brush of the artist who "dipped his brush in light and air." What lends zest and danger to this expedition for a priceless canvas is that it is in possession of a tribe of cannibal Indians, the Seris of Tiburon Island, which lies in the Gulf of California. And these fierce and unfriendly Seris guard the portrait of the lady with jealous care. Also, the art connoisseur who is willing to risk life and fortune for "The Lost Mariana" has a malign rival who is willing to match wit and wealth against him. From these circumstances you can whet your imagination for a story of strong character and climax.

(*A Four-Part Story—Part One*)

CHAPTER I.

THE PIECES OF THE PUZZLE.

MR. OLIVER STUYVESANT touched one of the ivory buttons on his ebony desk; a swift and noiseless attendant appeared, and Mr. Stuyvesant, in the courteous and kindly manner that changed not for the most important of his clients or the most humble of his workers, said:

"Go to the Velasquez gallery, Robert, and ask Mr. Jerome to come here, if he is not occupied."

The attendant seemed instantaneously to disappear, through the soundless door, like some slave of the magic lamp; for not even a creaky shoe could have made itself heard upon the rich, many-colored Persian carpet. From the wide, carved panels of the oaken walls half a dozen pictures glowed in the golden light streaming through the western windows. A chair or two completed the room's contents—yet this simple room cost, in insurance on the pictures, at least a thousand dollars a year.

The office was one of a suite of private rooms on the upper floor of Mr. Stuyvesant's house of business, which stood in Fifth Avenue, with no name upon sign, or door, or window; yet, in its time, no business in New York, Paris, or London, was better or more favorably known.

There were treasures of gold, silver, and precious gems; platinum and ivory, jade and amber; silks, tapestries, and rugs; bronze, marble, and copper; and, in the renowned picture galleries, there were certain pieces of paint-covered canvas or panels of wood much more precious than gold.

In fact, whatever was rare and curious and of first-class quality in craft work, or the fine arts, whether ancient or modern, classical or exotic, usually found its way to the Stuyvesant galleries. Even if not for sale, it gravitated there, just the same; for Oliver Stuyvesant, as all the Avenue knew, would rather give a costly exhibition of what pleased him than sell what he did not like and make great profit thereby.

He had done more to cultivate fine taste among wealthy Americans than

any other influence of the times. Scores of the richest and keenest art patrons turned to Oliver Stuyvesant for guidance, knowing that on his judgment and good will they could count unhesitatingly. But Stuyvesant's chief claim to distinction rested upon his work on behalf of public art museums. He had made great gifts or loaned important collections to museums from New York to San Francisco; and all that he owned —including his matchless collection of Velasquez portraits—was to go after his death to the Metropolitan Museum.

Mr. Stuyvesant waited the advent of Mr. Jerome. From a linen envelope showing many signs of use, taken from a locked drawer in his desk, he had withdrawn a number of slips of paper, which he read and mused over, with a smile of pleasure on his face; the smile which a man reserves for something very dear to him.

The noiseless door reopened, and Anthony Jerome, the most important, most confidential of all the Stuyvesant employees, appeared.

Anthony Jerome possessed some kind of remote family kinship with his patron; but that accidental fact did not account for the high and intimate degree of favor which he enjoyed in the service of Oliver Stuyvesant. Well known in many clubrooms, studios, and Broadway cafés, he seemed to most of his cosmopolitan acquaintances only a rather exceptionally intelligent young society man; but art experts from New York to Tokyo knew him as the keenest judge and shrewdest buyer in the service of America's greatest dealer.

"Morning, Tony," said Mr. Stuyvesant, "and how are you to-day?"

"Fine and dandy."

"Head clear, and in good running order, is it?" continued the art dealer, throwing a keen glance at his favorite, whose somewhat bohemian habits sometimes worried him greatly. "Or were you out late last night?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Stuyvesant—how could you think such a thing!" cried Jerome, in an injured tone, which made Stuyvesant smile. "I'm clear as a bell this morning."

"Well, that's good, for I need your counsel."

"I'm very much at your service," responded Jerome, putting off his joking manner as he saw that his employer was unwontedly serious.

Oliver Stuyvesant nodded his acknowledgment.

"I think I'm going to surprise you," he said, slowly. "I am arranging, in fact, a little drama for you, Tony; a very romantic little drama."

"I've always contended that you are a sort of modern Harun-al-Rashid," said Anthony. "You really care more for strong stories and adventures, and odd characters, than you do for art—and that's saying a whole lot."

"You're not far wrong, Tony. But life itself is an art, if you care to look upon it so. It is full of true dramas, and actual romances; and I've a great taste for them," said Oliver Stuyvesant. "In fact, I've sought for them as I seek for great pictures—and I've found some queer things in my time. It is to talk with you about one of the queerest of them all that I've called you in this morning. I'm going to tell you about my hobby of hobbies; a thing I've kept to myself for nearly twenty years, but which now has reached a point where I must let you into my fun, and ask you to help me realize a very dear and beautiful little dream of mine.

"I'm going to tell you what I know about the lost Mariana, Tony, and the chance—the perfectly amazing chance —which has suddenly put me on its trail—a trail that's been hidden for centuries."

"The lost Mariana!" said Jerome, puzzled, yet with a dim memory stirring in his mind. "The lost Mariana! I've heard something, somewhere, or somehow, about it, but I can't quite recall——"

Oliver Stuyvesant smiled. "You're half remembering something I said to you some years ago, soon after you reluctantly gave up a little—a very little—of your polo and poker and musical comedy, and condescended to do a little work for me. Don't you remember a trip to Madrid in 1900——"

"Oh, yes! When I went to Don Baltasar de Monterey's place, to look at the fake Greco drawings he wanted us to buy! Now I remember," said Jerome. "You told me to call upon one of the art dealers there, I've forgotten his name, and ask him if he had ever heard about a painting by Velasquez known as the lost Mariana —a portrait of—well, that I've forgotten. The dealer told me he had heard nothing, save a wild fable, which personally he considered to be nonsense, and which"—here Jerome smiled broadly, at his employer—"was only swallowed by credulous Yankees."

Oliver Stuyvesant laughed. "Yes, I recall his message. Now, draw your chair closer, and I'll show you the evidence in the case of the lost Mariana —the broken pieces of a puzzle, Tony, at which I've worked for twenty years —and which now I may put together at last."

Jerome obeyed, and gazed curiously at the little heap of papers on the writing pad.

"Exhibit number one," said Stuyvesant, lifting a creased and time-stained piece of parchment. "You're not familiar with Spanish? Well, I'll roughly translate. Listen closely, for this is the corner stone of the whole case."

And the art dealer slowly translated the faded Spanish on the parchment, while Anthony Jerome listened eagerly:

"New York, December 20, 1897. I, Carlos Mestres, Count of Mallorca, Catalonia, Spain, in consideration of innumerable acts of friendship, both financial and otherwise, for which I am deeply grateful, performed on my behalf by my most dear friend, Oliver Stuyvesant, of New York, do hereby give and bequeath to him all my rights of ownership in the picture known as the lost Mariana.

"It is a portrait of Mariana de Austria, second wife of King Philip IV. of Spain, painted by the court painter, Don Diego Velasquez de Silva, better known to immortal fame as Velasquez, the greatest painter of all times.

"The picture was given by King Philip to my ancestor, Don Miguel Francisco de Mestres, sometime Viceroy of New Spain, and by him carried to Mexico, where it was seized in a port of that country by the English pirate, John Cromwell, brother of Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, and subsequently disappeared.

"But the tradition has been handed down in my family from generation to generation that this great picture, the greatest painted by the immortal master, is still in existence, and that some day it will be discovered.

"Being the last of my family, and nearing my end, I, therefore, give and bequeath this picture of Mariana de Austria to my friend and benefactor, Oliver Stuyvesant of New York.

"As you see, Tony, this document is duly signed, and witnessed before a notary public.

"Poor Mestres! He died soon afterward, but, fortunately, in his native Spain."

"I'd bet a box of good cigars against a cocktail, that I know who paid for his ticket home," said Jerome.

"Mestres was one of the most likable men I've ever met," pursued Stuyvesant, ignoring the remark. "I was able to place a little art writing in his way, catalogues, and so forth, and he put an extravagant value upon my small services. Literally by the hour, he would sit with me and talk of Velasquez, whose work he knew as none other, not even Whistler, ever knew the master of masters. And he was certain that some day the great lost painting of Velasquez, the lost Mariana, as it is called in the few books that tell the story, would turn up again.

"Velasquez, as you know, spent practically all his life in King Philip's court, painting the king, and his successive queens, and his children, and court personages, and dwarfs and dancers.

"When Philip married Mariana of Austria, Velasquez found a new and wonderful subject for his marvelous art. But, so ran the tradition in the Mestres family, the king was greatly displeased by one of these portraits. Philip the Fourth rather fancied himself as an art critic, you know, and he took a dislike to this picture. The painter, who turned grouchy, as painters have done, even when kings are their patrons, from the beginning of time, refused to retouch what he regarded as a masterpiece. There was a

deuce of a row, and Velasquez and Philip were estranged. But the king, who was a lonely soul, misunderstood by the inferior people about him, found in his friendship for Velasquez a great consolation. So to get rid of the occasion for the row, he presented the offending picture to Don Miguel Francisco de Mestres, when the latter was appointed Viceroy of New Spain, and bade him take it with him to America. And there it disappeared. Now, then, listen to exhibit number two."

And Oliver Stuyvesant picked up another of the slips.

"This is taken from 'Hakluyt's Voyages,' being the story of one of the minor world-ranging pirates of merry England who did such a thriving business raiding the Spanish Main. It concerns Captain John Cromwell, whom a dim tradition—still alive along the west coast of Mexico—declares to have been a renegade brother of the Puritan general, Oliver Cromwell. This is the passage:

"Herehence we sailed to a port called Arica, which is in Mexico, and found a ship called the *Cacafuego*—which is to say, *The Spitfire*—laden with treasure, which was being put on board at this port, where there was a residence occupied at certain seasons of the year by the viceroy, Don Francisco de Mestres, who was planning to return to Spain, with much wealth amassed in this country.

"The viceroy himself was not yet come down from the interior parts; which was matter of no regret to us, for no doubt many soldiers would have been with him.

"So we took the *Cacafuego*—caring nothing for what fire it might spit at us—having shot at her three pieces of ordnance, and strake down her mizzen and, being entered, we found great riches, jewels, and precious stones, and thirteen great chests full of church plate and priestly garments of the Spanish idolatry; also much gold, and six and twenty tons of silver bars of the weight and thickness of a brick-bat echo.

"Also a fair picture, in a rich shrine, of the King of Spain his queen, Mariana of Austria, as saith the captain of this ship, with weeping and lamenting, and much becrossing of himself for that, he said, the viceroy valued this trifling picture, yes—cried he with an oath—more than all the treasure.

"Which talk ministered matter of laughter to us both then and long after, for how could a trifling picture, no matter how seemly, be worth all the great treasure? So we burned that ship, and presently departed."

Oliver Stuyvesant laughed with keen relish. "The man who chronicled Captain Cromwell's voyage was a mighty good historian of fancy piracy, but a very poor art critic, wasn't he, Tony? For, as a matter of fact, that picture—which undoubtedly was Velasquez's portrait of Queen Mariana, was—and now is, if it still exists—one of the world's most wonderful masterpieces.

"Velasquez, for whom the spirit of art, as Whistler says, dipped his brush in light and air; Velasquez, who as regards technique, was unquestionably the greatest painter who ever lived, accomplished in this portrait his chief work, his magnum opus.

"And my firm opinion is that this great painting may still exist. Cromwell's log books are intact, and were kept carefully. They show no record of the painting having been sold, or destroyed. When Cromwell was captured—after he had unwisely turned from robbing the Spaniards to robbing his fellow countrymen, and they hanged him in chains on London Docks, only a very small portion of his immense booty was recovered. It was well known that he had made several caches, in various places along the west coast of Mexico, or the Gulf of California. Two of these were long afterward discovered. In one yet to be discovered, the greatest painting of the greatest painter of all the world awaits, so I truly believe, the coming of the predestined rescuer who shall restore the lost Mariana to the world of art."

Putting down his memoranda, Oliver Stuyvesant continued: "There is just one more piece to the puzzle, Tony, which I'll show you in a minute. One by one, during the twenty years since poor Mestres put me on the trail, I've been gathering these clews and indications; for I burn to be the rescuer of the lost Mariana—this I freely confess, my lad—as a younger man might burn to find the lady of his soul. My collection of Velasquez paintings is only second to that in the Prado. To add

to it this jewel—the lost Mariana—well, that ambition has been mine for many years, and for a long time I have been actively engaged in searching for the lost Mariana. I ran down the entry in Cromwell's log book. I gathered confirmatory items in other places—they are all here, copied on these slips. I need not trouble to read the minor ones. I've had men working in the British museums, and in Madrid, among the archives of the colonial office, and in Mexico City, and in the towns along the west coast of Mexico, searching old records, and books, and legal documents for references to Captain Cromwell, and Viceroy Mestres. And now, Tony, after this preamble, listen to this letter from George Townsend, our San Francisco agent, who has looked after my investigations on the Pacific coast—for whenever I'm hunting anything, a picture, or a hobby, I prefer to do it through a second person. It saves me a lot of trouble and also saves my pocketbook much damage—for when people know that a so-called millionaire wants anything—whew-w-w! up go the prices. Now, listen to Townsend:

"Dear Mr. Stuyvesant: I am at last able to give you some reliable information concerning Captain John Cromwell and his treasure. My information comes to me through a big-game hunter who has made many voyages in his steam yacht in the Gulf of California, visiting the mysterious and famous Tiburon Island, where the cannibal Indian tribe of Seris have their headquarters, and also the island of the Angel Guardian, on the Baja California side of the Gulf.

"This hunter is a Captain Jarvis Delamere, who owns extensive ranches near the Yaqui River, on the west coast of Mexico, and has been a financial partner of the pearl merchant, Señor Pedro Malpico, of Mazatlan. The recent revolutions in Mexico have practically ruined Captain Delamere, and I suspect, also, that he has quarreled with Señor Malpico—who is the same Malpico who attempted to sell us the stolen Gothic chalice, taken from the cathedral in Rosario, five years ago. These details, please note, are essential matters. Now for the facts bearing upon Captain Cromwell.

"Delamere only recently discovered, through Señor Galvez, the lawyer, of Mazatlan, that I was gathering information—presumably for a book to be written by a friend of mine—on the ancient pirates of the Gulf, and so he came to me here in San Francisco to tell me that he possesses evidence which positively locates one, if not two, of the undiscovered caches of Captain Cromwell, which evidence he obtained through his friendship with the cannibals of Tiburon Island.

"I, myself, know for a positive fact, on testimony that is indisputable, that Captain Delamere is the one white man who thoroughly knows Tiburon Island. He gained the friendship of the chief of the Seris some years ago, and has frequently landed on the island, where many prospectors and explorers have lost their lives. He declares that the Seris regard the place where the Cromwell treasure is cached with superstitious awe, and it is held strictly taboo. He nearly lost his life on one occasion when he attempted to go where he thought it was; for he was watched and followed by the Seris.

"Now, however, since he has lost all his money in the revolutions, he is anxious to go to Tiburon for the express purpose of locating the treasure, and he wants us to finance the expedition, which will require a considerable number of gunmen, prepared, if necessary, to fight the Seris. After many interviews with Delamere, and after examining the log books of his previous trips to Tiburon, written at a time when he had not thought of venturing upon the present plan, I am convinced that he has ample reasons for believing that the Cromwell cache is located either on Tiburon, or the island of the Guardian Angel, thirty miles away.

"Hoping that this information will seem of service to you in your investigation and waiting for your further instructions——

"And so forth, 'George Townsend.' I've telegraphed to him, Tony," said Mr. Stuyvesant, looking keenly at Jerome; "and I trust that you will approve what I said."

"I usually O. K. your decisions, chief," remarked Anthony Jerome, "and if what I hope you have told Townsend is——"

"Yes, lad, I told him to expect you in San Francisco as soon as the Western Limited could get there——"

Jerome reached for the telephone, remarking: "It leaves this end of the line at five this evening. Operator, get me my apartment. Go on, Mr. Stuyvesant."

"It'll be your business to investigate all the details of the Delamere claims, and report each night by wire. If things are what I hope, I'll put up the money to finance the expedition to Tiburon. There's your call."

The telephone was buzzing. Jerome

turned to it. "Hello, is that you, Jackson?"

"Yes, sah."

"Pack up, Jackson; we take the Western Limited this evening, for San Francisco. Get me an apartment, and fix yourself up with a lower."

"Yes, sah; I understand; everything as usual, sah?"

"Yes, except that I want the things I brought from India two years ago, Jackson; the hot-weather outfit. All right!" Turning from the telephone, Jerome remarked: "It gets mighty hot in the Gulf of California, I'm told."

"So I believe," commented the art dealer; "but a lean, bony person like you needn't worry. Think of me! Whew! But I need reducing——"

"Do you mean to say that you're going, too?" shouted Jerome.

"There's nothing surer in this world—if anybody goes," said Oliver Stuyvesant. "Do you suppose I've tracked the lost Mariana down through the centuries to miss the end of the trail, even if it does take me among the cannibals of Tiburon? Adios, young man—but remember this," he added, very seriously. "Keep a sharp watch on Captain Delamere. His connection with Malpico is enough to cast all kinds of suspicion on him, for if ever there was a more treacherous rascal than Malpico, I'd surely like to know him in order to add him to the book of scoundrels which some day I'll write as a result of my career in the world of art."

CHAPTER II.

CAPTAIN DELAMERE OF SAN FRANCISCO.

Five days later Anthony Jerome arrived at his hotel in San Francisco, brisk boys in livery racing for his bags; and a clerk was handing him a telegram before he had half completed his signature on the register.

"Came two days ago for you, Mr. Jerome. Your room is number sixty-seven."

Anthony's room in San Francisco overlooked Union Square. A brilliant blue sky blazed with morning sunshine, for the ubiquitous San Francisco fog was only just beginning to gather out near the Farallones for its daily descent upon the city. The green grass was like pellucid enamel, splashed with vivid beds of gorgeous flowers. Loafers loafed all over the place, flat on their backs in the sun or the shade, as their fancy preferred the one or the other, and the benches lining the walks were thronged.

Along one side of the gay little plaza ran a row of palms, and as the door shut behind the obsequious young man who had borne his bags, and made ready his bath, Jerome wondered why the plaza seemed so strangely foreign, as though he were in some exotic country, far from his own United States. Then he smiled, as he suddenly decided that it was because there were no "keep off the grass" signs here. Idle folk and tramps, respectable people, and drifting riffraff, could slump down at their own sweet will. He had traveled very far, not only in miles, he realized, but in more significant ways. He had passed out of the domains of the usual and had entered the region of the unexpected. And soon, he hoped, he would pass from this frontier of the foreign into the mystery of the sea, out through the Golden Gate, into the Pacific, down then toward the Southern Cross, under stars he had never glimpsed, to a region that was as little known as any spot on earth.

Tearing open the telegram that had been awaiting him, he got out the little notebook which contained the code used only by Oliver Stuyvesant and himself, and deciphered the message, writing it down as he proceeded. It ran:

Have arranged for you to meet Townsend away from his office. Call him up as soon as you arrive and he will tell you where to meet him. We must proceed most cautiously. An effort was made the night you left New York to rob my desk, apparently to obtain papers relating to the Mariana. Night watchmen scared away burglar, who escaped. Evidently Townsend is being watched, and his reports to me known or suspected, and those watching him have agents in New York. Anxiously awaiting your impression of Delamere. STUYVESANT.

George Townsend's name was in the telephone book, listed as manager of the

West Coast Trading and Pearl Company, and Anthony put in a call.

"This is Mr. Townsend," he heard, a moment later. He knew Oliver Stuyvesant's Pacific coast agent from previous visits to San Francisco.

"Hello, Townsend, this is Jerome," he replied. "I've just got in, and a wire from the chief told me to call you up at once."

"Good! I've everything arranged," was the reply. "I'll meet you by the Stevenson memorial—you know the place—in Portsmouth Square—in an hour—if that will suit you? All righto! I'll have a taxi, and we will go to where we will find Delamere.

"I don't come to the hotel, because I'm being trailed, but I can shake off the son of a gun, I guess, by leaving this building through the engine room, and going out into Sansome Street by the rear door.

"Now, listen. If I think I'm still being watched, when I meet you, I'll be smoking a cigar, and in that case, pay no attention; go right on through, into Chinatown, and fool around there, and go back to the hotel as if you were just a tourist. See? And then I'll call you up later on. Understand?"

"I do. If you're smoking, I give you the go-by. All right," said Jerome, and he gayly proceeded to take a hot bath, and shave, and otherwise refresh himself after his long journey.

He was soon on his way from Union Square to the quainter quarters of the city. Having plenty of time, he strolled slowly through the maze of hillside streets and alleys amid which Chinatown puts forth its exotic manifestations.

Weird music was being executed—perhaps tortured would be the more fitting description—in many of the tall houses that lined Grant Avenue; with a shrill shrieking of horsehair fiddles, and the banging of gongs and drums. There were buildings gorgeously magnificent with towers and turrets, richly gilded and brilliantly colored; and hundreds of humbler shops, where goldworkers were patiently intent upon elaborate designs, next door to butcher and fish shops where strange, varnished meats were hung up together with fresh devilfish and strings of dried abalones, while live fish swam to and fro in tanks, and ducks and chickens and pigeons quacked, and clucked, and cooed, in the midst of odors indescribably mixed, and powerfully pungent of the Orient.

In Portsmouth Square the same—or what looked like the same—wonderful gang of loafers that he remembered from of old were talking and smoking on the row of benches along the upper walk; or, were scattered about on the grass, sleeping, or drunk, or drugged. There were Scandinavians, Portuguese, English cockneys, Maine men or Nova Scotians, Filipinos, negroes, Kanakas, and turbaned Hindus; mariners and roamers and adventurers from all the ends of the world.

In the midst of the little square stood the tall shaft surmounted by the sail-spread, bronze galley which recalls that master of romance who once upon a time loafed with the vagabonds of the memory-haunted square where in the olden times the Spanish soldiers and padres held evanescent rule, and where the argonauts pitched the tents of the gold rush of '49.

Standing in front of the memorial was a tall, stout-bodied, ruddy-cheeked business man, while at the corner of the square, opposite the grim hall of justice, stood a taxicab, its motor softly churning.

"Hello, Jerome," he said, cautiously. "I guess it's all right. Anyhow, we have to take chances, or go out of business, eh, what? So come along, and I'll take you to our friend from Mexico. How are you, anyhow?"

"Oh, I'm fit," said Jerome; and followed Townsend to the waiting cab, which drove off as soon as they had entered.

"Let me man the conning tower for a little while," said Townsend, "and then we will talk."

Whereupon he knelt on the seat with his eyes at a small window in the rear of the cab, and for several minutes he intently watched, while the cab drove up and down side streets and followed a

circuitous and apparently objectless course. Finally he spoke through the tube to the driver:

"All right, Pat, let her go."

The driver put on more speed, and the cab proceeded along Montgomery Street to Market, and thence out that famous road toward the Twin Peaks.

"Delamere is waiting for us at the Cliff House," said Townsend, sinking back in a corner, with a sigh of relief. "So far as I can judge, I've shaken off the son of a Turk who's been shadowing me, and we will have a snug, old-time luncheon, and talk things over with Delamere, in a private room."

"I had a notion you might be taking me to his yacht——"

"Nothing doing!" declared Townsend; "not yet, anyhow. But hold on; I'm dying for a smoke. I was an awful chump to use the no-smoke sign as a safety signal, for as soon as I got to the memorial, I was crazy for a drag. Gee, that tastes good!"

He puffed out immense clouds of fragrant Manila smoke, and in a moment Jerome was aiding him.

"Now, about Delamere," Townsend began. "My opinion is that he is absolutely on the level; but, just the same, Mr. Stuyvesant is perfectly right in advising great caution in dealing with him. In a nutshell, here are the facts about Captain Jack Delamere. He's a San Franciscan adventurer, and favorably known, on the whole, though he's been mixed up in some rough stuff in his time. He's a sea captain, when he wants to be. He's been all sorts of things, in his time. He went to Mexico some years ago, and settled at Guaymas. There he took chances in mining, and for a while, after his copper mine petered out, he ran a big fishing concession, with a canning-factory attachment, south of Mazatlan. Then he branched out into pearling, and that's what got him hooked up with Pedro Malpico, that son of a Turk who's making trouble now——"

"That's definitely known, is it?" asked Jerome.

"Well, no, it's not," admitted Townsend. "We're morally sure that the name of the nigger in our woodpile—the guy who is trying to beat us to the Tiburon Island cache—is Pedro Malpico; but he's a clever scoundrel, as everybody who ever has been stung by him—and I am one of many, confound him!—must admit. And we have as yet no direct proof that Malpico is the one who is working in the dark against us.

"Here's the situation. Delamere was making heaps of money before he met Malpico, with his fishing concession, and his garbanza ranch near the Yaqui River. That's why he could afford the expensive luxury of a steam yacht, and his hunting trips up the Gulf. Malpico induced him to invest a big bunch of capital in his pearling business, to outfit a lot of new boats.

"From the very start, Delamere says he suspected that Malpico was cheating him. But Delamere cared more for his hunting and fighting and general sporting life than he did for the fifty thousand he put into the pearling boats—because the mazuma was plentiful, then. So he had a fine and dandy time—till the Madero revolution suddenly broke out, and overturned old Diaz, and Delamere all at once found himself without his fishing concession, and with his Yaqui River property taken away from him by a clever trick of the Madero governor in that part of the country.

"Then he went after Malpico for his fifty thousand, but Malpico, of course, held on to it; so Delamere was flat broke. It was just then that he heard about Mr. Stuyvesant's researches, and learned that I was handling the chief's Pacific coast interests, so he blew into San Francisco one day, and here he is now, with his yacht in the harbor; but no crew, no coal, no money—but with a map of Tiburon, and, so he swears, the knowledge of where old Captain Cromwell buried his loot. But, say, Jerome, on the level now—do you take any stock in this pirate-treasure business?"

Jerome laughed. "Well, Townsend," he said, "Oliver Stuyvesant does, anyhow."

"Heavens, don't I know that? Haven't I been writing to every little town up and down the Mexican coast, from Acapulco to Guaymas, trying to get stuff, no matter how fantastic, about Cromwell? But Mr. Stuyvesant has plenty of mazuma without looking for pirate gold."

"It's not the gold he wants, Townsend—though if he is right about Cromwell, there's a heap of treasure in that cache of his, wherever it may be," answered Jerome. "It's art that's interesting him, as usual. He thinks that Cromwell had a lot of wonderful art stuff in his treasure—church ornaments, and maybe an old Spanish painting or two. You see?"

"Of course, I do," declared Townsend. "Mr. Stuyvesant never let on to me why he was so anxious about Cromwell's cache; but now I understand. Well, it's up to Delamere, now. He is ready to swear that he can reach the cache. And I guess that Malpico has a notion that Delamere knows the secret of Cromwell's gold. Say, this is getting to be some deal, isn't it? Look here Tony," and here the brawny hand of Townsend grasped Jerome's arm; "I declare in on this, remember now! If you make a deal with Delamere to go to Tiburon, I want to go, too, even if I ship as the cook, or the bos'n, or something—cabin boy, if necessary!"

Jerome laughed. "If I have my way, I'll like nothing better," he replied.

"Well, you will have the say, won't you? I thought you came out to run the whole show."

"I'm only the advance agent, the scout," replied Jerome. "Mr. Stuyvesant will take command, if we actually go to Tiburon."

Townsend jumped with astonishment. "Is that so? Then, by Jupiter, that settles it; I must go," he asserted. "This trip will be a pretty risky one, Jerome, believe me, and Mr. Stuyvesant will need all the trusty people he can manage to secure. And I want to tell you something—Oliver Stuyvesant was mighty good to me, once, at a time when I needed a friend. I want a chance to show him that I don't forget."

Jerome, who felt toward Stuyvesant much as Townsend did, looked with cordial respect at his companion's earnest face, and said: "I dare say the chief will need us both, Townsend. I'll certainly back you up."

While they were talking the machine had been speeding smoothly through the sun-drenched green woods and lawns of Golden Gate Park, and soon the incessant, soft thundering of the surf along the sandy beach was all about them. Emerging from the park, near the ship that was the first to sail through the Northwest Passage, but which now rests upon the earth, its voyaging done forever, they turned up the hill to where the Cliff House stands overlooking the vastness of the Pacific.

Here they were shown to a private dining room. Seated at the table was a thickset, very swarthy man of fifty-odd, with an immense tangle of black, curly hair, streaked with little dabs of white.

"Well, Captain Delamere, this is Mr. Jerome, of New York," said Townsend.

Jerome shook hands with the stranger, who, a little to Anthony's surprise, remained seated. Himself an athlete, and well accustomed to estimating strength and training in boxers and wrestlers, Jerome knew as he exchanged grips with Delamere that he was meeting an exceptionally powerful man. The slight pressure of his tremendously large hand gave an impression of gigantic muscular force held in reserve.

"Glad to meet you," he said; "and I hope you're hungry, for I've been ordering a regular royal gorge, to fill in the time while I've been waiting."

And his breath, though not his intonation, nor any other sign, betrayed the fact that Captain Delamere had likewise been doing his best, with the efficient aid of the famous Cliff House cocktails, to increase his appetite for the meal he had ordered.

Jerome was quite ready for the best, and plenty of it, as, indeed, he was

at most times. While the hearty meal was disposed of, together with a stout flask of Chianti, they chatted on indifferent subjects. But when the cigars and coffee were before them, Captain Delamere heaved his big body out of his chair, and went to the door and locked it.

"I suppose you want to talk business, Mr. Jerome," he remarked, as he seated himself again, and drew some papers from an inner pocket; "and I am sure I do. Let's get right down to hardpan. You—or Mr. Stuyvesant, for whom you act—want to find Cromwell's cache. I know where it is. I can prove that fact. And I can take you there. Now, then, first of all, let's get down to terms. If I make good, what do you offer me, as to the division of the treasure?"

"I think it's up to you to name the terms, Captain Delamere," remarked Anthony, decidedly. "You know where the cache is—or say you do. I think the trump cards are with you. For Mr. Stuyvesant, I will first say this. He has no disposition to haggle about terms; but, of course, he never throws his money away."

Delamere looked hard at Anthony; then at Townsend. He brooded over his cigar for a little while, then he said:

"I'll put it short and sweet, take it or leave it, heads you win, tails you don't. You put up the money for the trip; pay me a salary of one hundred dollars a week for the voyage, and sign a paper giving me half interest in what we get away with—if anything."

"First prove to me that we should take the trip, Captain Delamere," answered Anthony, "and I'll accept your terms—very willingly—with one proviso."

"Which is?"

"That in case we should find a picture—a picture of a Spanish queen, known as the lost Mariana," answered Anthony, "it is agreed that Mr. Stuyvesant alone possesses any claim to it."

"Picture? A picture of a Spanish queen?" hoarsely cried Captain Delamere. "Do you mean to tell me that you're going to put up money for to hunt treasure on Tiburon Island, among them cannibals, for the sake of a picture?"

"For the picture of a Spanish queen, Captain Delamere. Yes, that is why we are interested," said Anthony, smiling at Delamere's frank amazement.

"Well, dog-gone my cats," remarked Delamere; "I've had lots of queer business deals, up and down this here west coast, from going after Russian seals in the wrong season, to running guns for General Castro—but treasure hunting for a picture of a Spanish queen is a new one on me."

At which point Captain Delamere poured out a goblet of Chianti and hastily drank it off, as if he felt the need of some strengthening influence.

"Well," he then declared; "it takes all kinds of folk to make a world, don't it? But that's all right—I'm perfectly agreeable to let Mr. Stuyvesant take all the pictures we find. I'll stick to the doubloons, and the silver bars, and the rest of the junk. It's fifty-fifty, on that stuff?"

"Fifty-fifty," agreed Anthony. "And now, may I hear why you think the treasure is on Tiburon?"

"You bet you may," said Delamere. "Here's the whole yarn."

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN DELAMERE'S STORY.

"Would you ever believe a born liar, even on his Bible oath?" began Captain Delamere, throwing away his cigar butt, and lighting a blackened stub of clay pipe.

Jerome, at whom the inquiry seemed particularly directed, laughed and said he did not know what to say; while Townsend, who was more accustomed to the captain's mental methods, knew that no answer was expected, and settled back in his chair.

"Well, sir, it was one of the worst liars I've ever met or ever heard about who first told me about the pirate treasure on Tiburon," Captain Delamere continued; "and for more'n three years I never gave the yarn he spun another thought, until things happened

at Tiburon itself to make me open my eyes.

"This here liar was a fellow from back East, who's known up and down the west coast, and in pretty nearly all the South Sea ports, and the Orient, where he drifts around, first doing one thing, and then another, and generally managing to get what he likes best of all, which is rum. Old Jake Likely is his name, or the one he goes by, anyhow; and sometimes he's a photographer, and then he is a traveling salesman for some firm that doesn't know his record, and then he's down and out for a while on the beach; and so it goes with him. I've met old Jake Likely in more'n half a dozen ports, during the last ten or fifteen years, and he always had a hard-luck story worse than the last time; but, I'll say this for Jake, that when he gets a bit tanked up, and begins to spin yarns, it's good fun to be with him, even though you know he's trying to lie his head off.

"Well, it was at Mazatlan that Jake meets me the last time, and spins this here yarn about Tiburon. He came aboard my boat, looking to sell some phonograph records he had brought down from Arizona, and for once he was fairly prosperous. We sat up mighty near all night, old Jake spinning yarns that got wilder and wilder as the *tecela* bottle got lower and lower. Most of them were sure enough lies, as I knew then, or found out later; but the one that I picked out for the prize lie of all was the one that had some real stuff to it.

"According to Jake, he and a man called Armstrong, who was a motorboat engineer, found themselves broke up in Arizona, at Yuma, that little town on the Colorado River where you cross into California; which is one of the hottest holes this side of hell.

"They decided they would pull their freight on account of a little trouble they got into; I don't know what it was; Jake he didn't tell me, so I didn't ask. But, anyhow, they got away in a motor boat, pretty suddenlike, and calculated they would keep on, after they got started, and go straight out the mouth of the Colorado, and down through the Gulf to Guaymas, or Mazatlan, and then up the Pacific coast, by easy stages, to San Diego in California. It was a big boat, with plenty of water on board, and several extra tanks of gasoline.

"They got through into the Gulf all right, though they nearly wrecked themselves on the bar; which is a nasty spot, as I can testify. They loafed along, having a good time shooting duck and geese and fishing, and occasionally getting a deer when they wanted meat. That country just swarms with game; everything from big-horn sheep and grizzly bear, and elk and mountain goat, up in the hills, to immense flocks of quail and ducks and doves; while as for fish, and turtle—well, you'd think I was the liar, instead of old Jake, if I opened up on that. But if we go down there, you'll see for yourself.

"Well, neither Jake nor this Armstrong man knew any navigation, and hadn't much notion where they were, at any stage of their trip. They reckoned they would just loaf along the Sonoran coast, running by day, till they struck Guaymas, which is the first civilized place there is to strike, in about two or three hundred miles of the most desolate and least known country in all the world.

"One day, Jake says, they anchored, along toward sundown, in the bay of an island where they see a lot of palms, and in the morning they walked up the cañon which emptied into the bay, and for the first time on all that trip, they see real trees, beside scrubby little palms and giant cactus. And the cañon broadened out, and they see what they take to be fig trees; immense, old trees, Jake told me, and orange trees, too; in fact, a regular orchard or big garden, with water running through grass-grown channels, and in the middle of all this was a fine house, like the kind you see in old Mexico; solid and thick, like a castle, or a church.

"Jake and Armstrong figured that they had reached some Mexican's ranch, and they boldly advanced, for both men knew enough Mexican lingo

to get along with, and they intended to go right up to the house and make themselves at home. But that's where they made a big mistake. They no sooner pushed out through the trees into the clear ground near the house than they heard a startled yell, and then a regular riot of yells broke out, and a band of naked Indians ran out from behind the house shooting arrows, and hurling big stones with a sort of sling some of them carried.

"Armstrong was struck in the shoulder, though he managed to keep on running, and they reached their boat and pushed off a few rods ahead of the gang; but Armstrong died that afternoon from the poison on the arrow. Jake tied him up in canvas, and buried him on the shore, and put up a big cairn of stones, so he said, over him, to keep away the coyotes. He even took the trouble to build a sort of rude cross with some old boards and burn Armstrong's name on it with a hot iron. Then he came along the coast and managed to reach Guaymas before his gasoline gave out. There he sold the boat, and went up through Hermosillo into Tucson, in Arizona, where he got his job peddling phonographs.

"Well, I let Jake's story go at that, figuring out that it was possible he might have got as far as Tiburon Island, some time or other, with some yachting party, or bunch of prospectors; for Jake now and then hired out as a cook, or a deck hand, when things got that bad with him that he had to do real work; but as for his discovery of the old castle, or church, and the fight with the naked Indians, I gave that part the go-by.

"Soon afterward I made my own first trip to Tiburon Island, a thing I had been planning to do for some time, but could not do because my cannery business took all my time.

"But things began to come easy, all in a rush. I secured a bunch of big contracts with New York and London firms for my fish, and for a few seasons I made money so fast that I guess it made my head swim. That's the only way, anyhow, I can excuse myself for letting some of that money, to the amount of fifty thousand dollars, get into the hands of Malpico. But I knew he was making money in the pearling business, and I meant to go into that pretty deep myself, after I had a little fun, for it's a business I have a taste for, and I claim that if the Gulf of California is properly searched bigger and better pearl beds can be found than any we know at present. Anyhow, I took a flyer with Malpico, and for the next two or three years I just loafed around the west coast, having a good time, and spending a lot of time—and a lot of money, too—on my trips up the Gulf.

"Now, Mr. Jerome, let me explain a little about Tiburon, so you can get the hang of the situation. That island has got the worse name of any place on the west coast, because that's where the Seri Indians have their headquarters. They are big strapping fellows, wonderful runners, and absolutely fearless fighters. For more than a hundred miles on all sides landward of their location they are protected by one of the most arid and burning deserts in all the world. They have never been Christianized; being the only tribe in North America where missionaries have never penetrated.

"One brave, young Spanish friar went there, a hundred and fifty years ago; but he was killed; and the Seris were so far away from the trails and roads of Mexico that the Spanish left them alone after that.

"Nor have they ever been licked in a fight, that is, never conquered, though, of course, sometimes they met bands of soldiers, when they were raiding on the other side of the desert, and were driven back. They have poisoned arrows, and stone clubs, and they tell horrible stories along the west coast of how the Seris use their teeth, like wild animals, when driven to bay. It is also said that they are cannibals; and I guess it is partly true. There have been famine times aplenty, up that barren Gulf, and now and then I reckon the Seris resorted to human flesh—but so have white men, so far as that goes,

when they were in a very bad situation. We've had one of the worst cases of cannibalism ever recorded, right here in California, at Donner Lake, where the immigrants were snowed in during the gold rush.

"Anyhow, for the last hundred years or more, the terror of this tribe has been a better protection for them than an army. Mexicans simply won't go near Tiburon, and the killing or utter disappearance of several parties of prospectors who went to Tiburon in recent years gave a fresh polish to the old traditions. The wildest and weirdest yarns imaginable are told about Tiburon; about the ruby mines, for example, and mountains of solid copper, and a lot more nonsense. Yet, as I found out, the truth about Tiburon is even wilder, in some ways, than the yarns.

"I went there first at a fortunate time; that is, it was fortunate for me. But it was a famine time for the Seris. For some reason or other, turtles were very scarce, and fish were hard to get; and they practically live on fish and turtle, with deer meat, when they can manage to kill a deer. But they are not good shots with the bow and arrow, and they are poor hunters. You see, in the matter of intelligence, they are really only a shade above the level of the very lowest savages, like the Bushmen of Africa, or the Terra del Fuego giants, and they never provide for the future during a good season, and in a bad season they worry along from day to day.

"Well, when I got there, and anchored in a bay near their principal village, they swarmed around the yacht in their tule rafts and dugout canoes—not looking for fight, but for grub. A big strapping fellow who seemed to be the chief had a few words of Spanish, and from what he said I got the drift of the case, and by showing the big chap a heaping plate of mixed grub, pork and beans, and rice, I managed to coax him on board, though at first he was as shy as a wolf. But the poor beggar could not stand the smell of that steamy plate of chow, so he came aboard, and tucked away the grub at a great rate, while I talked to him, and sat by his side, and made friends. Meanwhile, my men were handing out crackers, and what cooked grub we had on hand, to the men, women, and children in the canoes, and when the poor devils on shore saw what was up they came streaming out to us in their canoes, and on their rafts, and even swimming when they could find no room in the canoes.

"I was afraid we might be raided, so I told the chief that if he would get the tribe on shore I would land a lot of provisions for him, and he could attend to the cooking and distribution. This was done, and I sent a lot of canned stuff, and pork and bacon ashore. During the night, I slipped away, and rushed back to Guaymas, which was only a fourteen-hour trip for my boat, and bought a lot of cheap but nourishing grub; beans, and corn meal, and pork, mostly, and then I went back to Tiburon, and landed the whole load as a present to the chief.

"That was the start, and it was a good one, for I gained the firm friendship of the chief, and the whole tribe, practically, as much as you ever gain the friendship of such people, for at the best they are very moody, and change their feelings overnight, like naughty children.

"Anyhow, I was pretty solid with them, except with the medicine men, or priests, of which there were five or six, under the boss rule of a bad, old skeleton of a priest who was against me from the start. But the priests were not in great favor themselves, that season, for the tribe had expected them to drive away the hunger devils, and they fell down on the job. So, while they tucked in the grub I brought like the rest, and mighty glad to get it, they had no thanks to give me, and they never approved of the chief's friendly spirit.

"As a matter of fact, from the Seri point of view, their attitude was pretty sound statesmanship. As I soon learned, the tribe had dwindled away, and degenerated, through its close intermarriage, till it was only a few hun-

dred fighting men, and a big crowd of old men, women, and children. But if they kept up the old terror of their name, they were fairly safe, and would be left alone on Tiburon. So they did not encourage the freedom with which I was permitted to land and hunt and wander over the mysterious island.

"I soon got wise to their hostile attitude, and I kept a sharp lookout, and steered a very careful course, I can assure you. And I spent most of my time in the chief's company. He was crazy for cigarettes, and I kept him supplied, when I was with him, but I never left enough to keep him going while I was away, so naturally, he always welcomed me when I returned.

"I had many long talks with the chief, and taught him some more simple Spanish words, so that by and by I was able to communicate with him freely. And I learned a lot of interesting things. First of all, I learned that old Jake Likely had told the truth. On my next trip to the island, after finding this out, I coasted the shore by day and discovered Armstrong's grave, which confirmed the whole thing.

"But when I asked to be shown the old house, I was met with an angry refusal. It took a lot of cigarettes to get the chief back into a friendly humor; but little by little I succeeded, and then I drew from him the story of the old house, which had been handed down from generation to generation, as the Indians preserve their legends all over the world.

"Briefly put, it seemed that the tribe, in ages past, in the beginning of the world, as the chief said, had been visited by a white god, in a floating island, with burning mountains belching flame and smoke from its sides, and this god had slain multitudes of the Seris, but in the end had become the great friend of the tribe. Landing on Tiburon, he had built himself a wonderful palace, and filled it with gold, and silver, and marvelous things. He made a law that it was death for anybody save himself or his white children, to enter the palace, and the Seris have kept that law ever since.

"Such was the main outlines of the legend. I poked and probed it in dozens of talks, and meanwhile put together many other things which I learned from Mexican friends in Mazatlan, and at last I came to the conclusion that this white god was no other than Captain John Cromwell, the English pirate, and that he had built a house in some valley on Tiburon Island, and, in all probability, had there buried some of the immense treasures he had gained by raiding the coast towns, and capturing Spanish ships.

"Naturally, I did my best to discover the location of the valley, which, as I knew from Jake Likely's account, opened up from a cañon on the shore in which palm trees grew. But there were probably a score of cañons opening out from the mountains of the island, with stunted palms growing in them; so the job was a difficult one, all the more because the Seris kept their boats afloat pretty much all around the island, or had parties of hunters scattered in various locations, and usually I would no sooner enter a bay anywhere on the island than the fact would be signaled by a smoke, and soon a lot of the Seris would show up.

"At last, however, I managed to find the place. Landing in a valley one morning before daybreak, after an all-night run up from Guaymas, I was undiscovered for several hours, and during that time I climbed to the tops of a number of mountain ranges which I had not climbed before, and from one of these I saw the valley, just as Jake described it—the fruit trees, the running water, and the old house—a very rough, but massive structure.

"I tried to get near it, but the band of watchers who are always maintained around the sacred place, caught me in the act, and I had a mighty close call, let me tell you, a mighty close call. They were going to kill me on the spot, but a son of the chief was there, and he interfered, and I was marched back, a prisoner, to the headquarters of the tribe. The priests seized their opportunity, and worried the chief to finish me, then and there, but he did not. I

was, however, warned away from Tiburon for good and all, and I was mighty glad to get away, and made up my mind to stay away until I could return prepared to reach the old house in spite of the Seris.

"And now, that chance is here. That's my story, Mr. Jerome. It's up to you to say whether we take the chance. Of course, I can't guarantee that we will find the treasure; but all the traditions of the Gulf indicate that it was on Tiburon that Captain Cromwell made his headquarters, and I feel sure that in that old fortress of his—where he held his high carouses, too, I suspect, from the stories the chief related—we will find his treasure."

"In such a place as that," said Jerome, "a painting might easily last for centuries if it were protected from rain——"

"Rain falls about once in five years, down there," remarked Captain Delamere.

"Once in a century would be enough to ruin a painting," said Jerome; "but if it was under a roof, in that dry air, it would last about as long as time itself."

"Well, then, what's your verdict?" asked the captain, and Townsend leaned forward to catch Jerome's answer.

"It's a shot in the dark, captain; it's a gamble, at best," said Jerome; "but I'll wire to Mr. Stuyvesant that I think we should take the risk. Even if we don't find the lost Mariana, we should have a lot of fun. And it's about time for Mr. Stuyvesant's yearly trip to the wilds anyhow."

CHAPTER IV.

PLANS.

Captain Jasper Delamere, his swarthy face flushed with excitement, rose to his feet as Anthony Jerome announced his decision to seek the treasure of Tiburon, and lifting his huge fist above his head he struck three mighty blows upon the table, causing the glasses and coffee cups to dance and tumble about as if a San Francisco earthquake was shaking the house.

"What are you up to, captain?" said Townsend.

"I'm touchin' wood," answered Delamere. "And if you're doin' anything, my motto is to do it good an' hard. I'm touchin' wood, because when Mr. Jerome says the deal is on, I says to myself, says I: 'Now Mister Malpico, look out! The luck is turned at last!' So I guess I better touch wood, so's not to spoil this new run of luck by playin' my hand too strong at the start of the game. One thing at a time, and git that thing done. That's me; that's Jasper Delamere's way o' doin' things. Townsend can tell you, Mr. Jerome, that from first to last the rock I've bumped against, and which has pretty damned near wrecked me, has been black Pedro Malpico. But now he'll see I'm not down an' out. The game is started up once more. Which is all I got to say for the present, I guess," added the captain, seating himself and relighting his pipe. "I've blown off steam, and now I'm ready for work. When do you plan to start, Mr. Jerome?"

"That depends on Mr. Stuyvesant," answered Anthony; "but I think I can say for him that he will waste no time. On the other hand, how soon can you be ready for sea?"

"My boat is anchored at North Beach," said the captain. "Mr. Townsend has been taking chances on the deal going through, and helping me out by keepin' a couple of good men, well known to him, on watch day and night, to see that Malpico didn't try any tricks with her.

"*The Roving Lass,* I call my boat, Mr. Anthony, and a sweet old girl she is, sure enough, and she lives up to her name, you bet. I bought her from a New York banker years ago, and I've been all over the Pacific, since then. Well, sir, I'll need a crew of say twenty men, all told, the stokehold gang included. I know just the man I need as first officer; Townsend here says he'll ship as second, and he knows enough about the sea for that job. Then there'll be coal, and stores, for a two months' cruise, because we don't know

how long we may have to knock around in the Gulf. Besides the crew, we need a good, handy gang of gunmen; regular two-fisted he-men from Texas or Arizona, for work ashore, if they're needed. And if you take my tip, you'll buy a couple of machine guns and tote 'em along, too."

Jerome began to laugh: "I say, Captain Delamere; this begins to sound like filibustering, or an invision of Mexico. Do you really figure on a lot of fighting? Can't we come to terms, some way, with your friends the Seris, and obtain the right to enter the old house, and buy what we find there? Of course, I know the taboo is a real handicap, but can't we get the old chief to forget the priests, and listen to reason, backed up with what he may want in the way of cigarettes and general loot?"

"You don't know the Seris, Mr. Jerome, and I do," said Delamere. "Mind you, I don't say your plan is impossible. It's all right, as a plan; and we can try it honest and fair. But that taboo is a real taboo, and if you've never dealt with savages you don't know what stubborn ideas they cling to. The Seris are worse than the South Sea natives, in that respect. No, sir; my notion is that we've got to outwit the Seris, somehow. We've got to get the whole gang away from the house in the palm-tree cañon, and then make a quick raid, and be ready to fight all the way through. Besides, remember this, there's always Malpico to worry about."

"Tell me about him," said Anthony. "How do you think he can interfere? He has no rights in Tiburon, any more than we have, has he? Do you think he may bring about governmental interference?"

"No," said Delamere, "I feel pretty safe as to that. The present authorities in Sonora, who have what jurisdiction there is—which ain't any, as a matter of fact—over the Seris, are not friendly with Malpico. He won't bother us that way. And things are so upset, generally, down in Mexico, with Villa's counter-revolution against Carranza, and with the Yaquis off on the war trail on their own account, that governmental interference ain't worryin' me. But if Malpico has the inside dope, or if he gets it later on, about what we're tryin' to do, then stand by for trouble. So I says, knock on wood whenever you think you may be safe from that devil's tricks—and hire a gang of gunmen to be on the safe side."

"I'll attend to that, captain," said Townsend, "if we decide it's necessary. You go ahead with your part of the job. Drop in at my office in the morning, and I'll put some money at your disposal, after I've arranged with Mr. Jerome. If all goes well, when will you be ready?"

"In a week or ten days," answered Delamere. "I could be ready in two days, if it was ordinary work; but we got to go very careful in this affair. I'll get papers for a voyage to Lima, or somewhere, and see to it that the men I ship are all right. It would be just like Malpico to ship a bunch of his own cutthroats on board, if he got a chance. So, you gentlemen run along, now. I've a motor boat tucked away up the shore a bit, and I'll cut around to North Beach, and start things going."

"All right, captain; we'll be off. I'll see you in the morning," responded Townsend, and with Jerome he at once reëntered the taxi and proceeded toward the city.

"Well, what do you think of Delamere?" Townsend inquired.

"He looks good to me," said Anthony. "All the same, there are several points on which I'd like more light. I'm sure he's telling the truth in all that concerns Tiburon, and his reasons for thinking that the Cromwell treasure may be cached there. But he's curiously cautious, it seems to me, about this former partner of his, Malpico. He doesn't make plain his relations with that man. How did Malpico get an inkling of the treasure? Why is he watching you? Why does he try to steal Mr. Stuyvesant's papers, through his agent in New York? I don't like the looks of this part of the business."

"Neither do I," agreed Townsend. "I questioned Delamere, along these

lines, several times, and he is, as you say, pretty skittish in his replies. So far as I understand the situation, he and Malpico had the devil and all of a row when the captain tried to get his money back from the pearl merchant. Why it didn't end in a killing, on the spot, considering the character of the men, is a mystery, unless neither was armed when they met. What I think probable, is that before the row came, Delamere talked too freely—perhaps when he had a lot of *tecela* on board—about the treasure on Tiburon, and that Malpico had him watched, and trailed him in his visits to me. Malpico probably found out some time ago that I was investigating the Cromwell story for Mr. Stuyvesant, and he put two and two together.

"He's a shrewd devil, this Malpico—and devil is the right name for him. He has spies and agents at work in all sorts of places, for there is nothing that happens on the west coast of Mexico that he has not something to do with. He's absolutely unscrupulous, and he makes a business of everything that will bring him money or excitement. He's had a hand in every revolution for the last twenty years, on one side or the other; sometimes on both sides at once. He is a director in half a dozen legitimate business concerns, fishing concessions, pearling, mining, ranching, and, on the side, does a smuggling and gun-running trade in half the republics to the south of us. You can bet your sweet life that Malpico isn't going to let anybody get away with anything out of the Gulf of California, which he regards as his own particular hunting grounds, if he can help it. The son of a Turk!"

"You and Delamere are about fifty-fifty in your liking for Señor Malpico," commented Jerome.

Townsend cast a sullen, frowning glance at his companion, and Anthony, who had always known Oliver Stuyvesant's Pacific coast agent as a jolly and good-humored business man, was sharply jarred by the revelation of another and far different aspect of his nature.

"Jerome," said Townsend, "I hope you'll agree that I have done my best to serve Mr. Stuyvesant loyally?"

"Absolutely, yes," replied Anthony.

"Then you'll understand I'm not kicking against my job, when I tell you that I was independent, and the head of a big business myself, some years ago," continued Townsend; "and I can't help regretting the change. Now, it was this same Malpico who put me out of business. He grabbed, just simply grabbed, the copper mine in Sonora which I had developed. He did it through his pull with a grafting governor with whom he split the profits of the deal. He made it legal, too; by changing the law. Pretty big pull, wasn't it? That's Malpico's specialty; doing things slick, and having a pull. In fact, he did the whole thing so smoothly, that by and by, when I was appointed as Mr. Stuyvesant's agent, I was obliged to meet Malpico on the same terms with other business men, though it's a bitter dose to swallow.

"So you may understand why I'm so keen to go on this expedition. I want a chance to show Mr. Stuyvesant that I appreciate his help. Also, I want a chance to even matters up with Malpico. If he's on to our game, he'll do his best to raid the cache himself. Now, the chances are very great, I figure, that he doesn't know where the cache is; so his game will be to watch us all the time, and follow us, and let us do the dangerous and heavy work, and then step in and get us with the goods on—so to speak—and grab the stuff himself."

"So you really think it may come to fighting?" asked Jerome.

"If we find the stuff, you bet," replied Townsend. "And I think it's good business to do what the captain suggested: hire a bunch of gun fighters, and buy a couple of machine guns as well."

"That's up to you, Townsend," said Jerome. "Go ahead, if you think you should. I'm sure that Mr. Stuyvesant would have nothing to do with any deal that involved a clash with the Mexican government, but if it's a case of fight-

ing a rascal like Malpico, for the lost Mariana, which is absolutely Mr. Stuyvesant's property, I know what Mr. Stuyvesant would say—which is, go the limit. He's never forgiven Malpico for trying to sell him that stolen chalice."

"I know," nodded Townsend. "Malpico fooled me on that deal, too, wise as I am to his tricks. Well, let's forget him for a while," and as he spoke he resumed his usual good humor; "and take a little *paseo* around town tonight. You and I haven't been along the line together for quite a few years."

"You're on," agreed Jerome; "that is, if you think we needn't worry about spies and trailers."

"I've been turning that over in my mind, too," replied Townsend; "and I can't see any further use in trying to keep under cover, so far as our doing business together is concerned. In fact, we can't keep that fact quiet, because we have lots to do in the next week. But we'll have to keep the exact nature of the business secret, and, so far as that goes, it looks like a cinch. There's only you, Captain Delamere, Mr. Stuyvesant, and myself in the secret."

"That's right," Jerome confirmed. "I'll be glad of a run around. What'll we do?"

"I want to show you San Francisco's newest and best in the way of cabarets - — " began Townsend.

"Oh, the deuce!" cried Jerome; "can't you do better than that? Cabarets! Of course, I know San Francisco is the inventor of the thing, but——"

"Wait till you see Tim Slater's," broke in Townsend; "you'll change your notion of cabarets. There's a girl dancing for him who has set the town crazy. Anyhow, Tim puts up the best dinner in town——"

"Now you're really saying something," commented Anthony. "Dancing is an old story, but a good dinner is always welcome."

"Then I'll call for you about seven," said Townsend. "We can cut away after dinner, if we're bored, and try a theater, or something."

"That will give me time to get a code wire off to the East," remarked Jerome. "It's nearly four o'clock now."

"And here's your hotel," said Townsend. "Hop out, and I'll run home."

Jerome obeyed, and entered the hotel. For the next three hours he was engaged in writing a careful, boiled-down account of the interview with Delamere, and transferring it to code.

Time passed more rapidly than he noticed; moreover, a little, gay sprite had bobbed into Anthony Jerome's mind, and it was interfering with his work by obtruding its suggestions of the fun that awaited him that night. Jerome had in his nature a deep, almost pagan streak of enjoyment of the good things of life; a streak that once or twice had threatened to overmaster his more serious interests. It gave him a liking for nocturnal adventures, and a relish for a somewhat expensive and polished bohemianism; a relish which only a few odd corners of New York, and San Francisco, could satisfy. In London and Paris, of course, it was easier to indulge his tastes, which now and then caused Oliver Stuyvesant serious worry, for he regarded Anthony with the grave affection which a wise father feels for a scapegrace son.

Townsend returned just as Jerome finished his task and had carefully dictated the long message, over the telephone, to the telegraph office.

"I'll be with you in a jiffy," Anthony cried, over the house phone, and hurriedly got ready.

It was not until he was several blocks from the hotel, in the cab with Townsend, that he suddenly recalled that he had left the code message, and also the plainly worded message which he had put into code, together with Mr. Stuyvesant's message of that morning, and his transcript of it, lying on the desk.

Then, promptly and unmistakably, the inner voice of Jerome's common sense said to him: "Turn back, and get that stuff, and destroy it, or put it in the hotel safe."

But the trouble with this warning voice was, simply, that it was not audible. Despite the fact that most men know well from practical experience

that they should pay heed to these silent promptings, most men disobey them when the warnings interfere with their comfort, or when they obtrude themselves at inconvenient times. So it was with Anthony Jerome. The exciting thought of the dinner awaiting him banished the suggestion of his spirit of caution.

CHAPTER V.

THE WILL TO POWER.

So they sped on smoothly, through the streets of the Latin Quarter, to a café not far from the water front where Timothy Slater cooked abalones and sand dabs and wild ducks as nobody else knew how; and where he ministered to the pleasure-loving spendthrifts of San Francisco, with his cabaret acts, even more skillfully than he did to their appetites.

Their table was on a slightly elevated part of the floor that surrounded a smooth dancing space, at one end of which an orchestra of guitars, flutes, castanets and a few brass instruments played remarkably well-executed music. On this floor Tim Slater nightly entertained his diners. There were famous violinists, and boxers, Hula-hula girls, and Japanese wrestlers, Indian fakers and Chinese jugglers, concert singers of stellar rank, and whirling dervishes and Oriental dancers galore; anything, and all things, that were amusing or exciting and sufficiently good in their own kind to please the exacting taste of Tim Slater.

The most wearied of rounders were seldom bored in Tim's place; for he insisted on technical excellence and had a strange talent for discovering new things, original stunts, or unknown artists who afterward became famous. Queer stories were afloat in San Francisco concerning some of the special nights, for special guests, at most special prices, which were arranged by Tim after the usual hours had been fleeted away for the rank and file; when men and women who rarely were seen in the outer circles of nocturnal life drove into the courtyard of the Tampico in their heavily curtained limousines; departing in the still white hour of the dawn—that pallid hour which often cloaks more sin than the blackest veils of midnight.

Several numbers of the program had been gone through, much to the satisfaction of the large crowd of diners, and Jerome, with a glass or two of wine mellowing his mood, was thoroughly enjoying it all, when a stir among those seated near a large table with a reserve card upon it caused him to glance in that direction just as a tall, broad-shouldered man followed by three or four men, came to the empty table. Involuntarily, Anthony stared at the tall leader and he thought:

"There's the finest-looking man I've ever seen—and also, in some odd way, the most repulsive."

And he continued to look at the stranger. He was a man of perhaps forty-five, though he might have been many years older or younger. His face was swarthy, and clean shaven, with features of a classical regularity, enlivened with bold, large eyes, brilliant like topaz, and placed far apart under a splendid arch of forehead. He carried himself like a soldier, yet there was nothing stiff in his bearing; on the contrary, he moved with an almost feline swiftness, grace, and sinuosity. An atmosphere of power and pride, tempered at present by a practiced habit of social graciousness as he seated his guests and beckoned smilingly to the nearest captain of waiters, enveloped him with an aristocratic distinction. There was hardly a man or woman within sight of his table who did not watch him for a longer or shorter time. His tremendous vitality seemed to send an etheric wave through the warm, flower-scented atmosphere.

"Who in the world is that?" Jerome asked his companion.

Townsend looked up from his fish.

"Ah!" said he lowly. "That's Black Pedro Malpico. The ugly beast! The ugly beast!"

"Ugly?" exclaimed Anthony. "Why, he looks like a Roman emperor, or a Greek god, in evening clothes."

"Humph!" snorted Townsend, growl-

ing like an angry bulldog, and the clenched protrusion of his jaw increased the canine resemblance. "Can't see it! Greek god; the devil! Isn't there a line in the Psalms somewhere about the gods of the heathen being demons? That fits Malpico. The peons along the west coast, you know, cross themselves when they talk about him. They say he long ago sold his soul to the devil."

Jerome laughed. "Well," said he, "if part of the price was personal power and good looks, and I think most men would demand them, the devil dealt very generously with him. I say," he added in a lower tone, "he seems to be bowing to you."

Townsend tossed a sulky nod toward Malpico, and said: "Yes, he has never admitted that he gave me any cause for a grouch in that mine-stealing exploit of his, and in my business relations, as I've told you, I can't afford to air my personal grievances. So we are outwardly on speaking terms, and the swine wants to speak now, apparently."

Malpico, indeed, with a cocktail in his hand, half consumed, had arisen and was advancing toward them.

"How are you, Mr. Townsend?" he said, in a courteous and pleasant tone.

With a crude clumsiness that distressed Jerome, Townsend muttered something incoherently; but, managing to control his anger, and taking notice of the fact that Malpico was looking at Jerome, he at last obliged himself to say:

"How are you, Malpico? You're looking fit, as usual. This is Mr. Jerome, of New York. He's Mr. Stuyvesant's personal representative."

Malpico bowed to Jerome, who, attracted by the other man's personality, in spite of the obvious current of something sinister and evil which underlay its exterior charm, got to his feet and made formal acknowledgment of the salute.

"Ah, yes?" said the Mexican. "Then I am sure there is something very interesting happening, or about to happen, in the realm of art, is it not so? I envy Mr. Stuyvesant; what a consolation, in a world of the commonplace and the feeble, to have such a warm-bodied and ever-fresh interest in life. Is it, may I ask, and I hope without indiscretion, Mexico which attracts the present attention of Mr. Stuyvesant?"

Townsend adroitly kicked Jerome under the shelter of the table and quickly said: "Oh, Mr. Jerome's plans are very indefinite. Chinese art is beginning to stir up the wise guys, more than anything else of late. Wouldn't you say so, Jerome?"

"Why, yes, quite so," agreed Anthony. "China, and the ancient art of the Toltecs, and the ruins of Peru—these are coming to be real live subjects. Are you interested in art, Mr. Malpico?"

The tall, superbly handsome Mexican turned toward Jerome, from a smiling, and somewhat amused scrutiny of Townsend, who on his part was eying Malpico with a somber intentness, and said: "Art is more than a mere interest, with me, Mr. Jerome. It's a fascination. I give at least a month out of my yearly vacation in Europe to the galleries. Art is one of the great, positive signs of what strong wills may accomplish in life; a thing which stirs me more than beauty—though beauty is better than wine—and wine is good—it is very good—is it not, Mr. Townsend?"

Townsend, apparently, was doing all he could to give the Mexican proof of this last assertion, for in the few moments that had passed since the latter had come to their table he had drank three or four glasses of the heady, strong sauterne which he and Jerome had favored. He gave no answer to Malpico, and the latter smiled, and turned again to Jerome. Anthony had remained standing, desirous of asking the Mexican to be seated, but restrained by Townsend's attitude. The curious way in which Malpico smiled when he spoke to Townsend made Jerome remember a panther he had once seen during a hunting trip in India tantalizing a wounded buffalo before he killed it.

"Ah, Mr. Jerome," said Malpico, again with a veiled glance at Townsend; "I hope we will meet again, and very soon, and talk, really expand in talk, about art. One has so few opportunities, here in the West, for that form of amusement. The men out here do very well to work with, or to drink with, or even to fight with—but they are very naïve, or primitive, one might say, in more subtle matters."

Townsend stared hard at the Mexican, and remarked: "Western men have to watch out sharply for the subtle stuff, now and then, Mr. Malpico. For instance, there was a subtle deal that didn't work, some years ago, in the matter of a Gothic chalice—which was subtly conveyed to the art market, but which we crudely discovered had been stolen."

Malpico laughed aloud, his clear, pleasant voice ringing through the room: "Good for you, Mr. Townsend—your memory is excellent," he said. "I, too, remember the case in point. Do you know, I myself was nearly deceived in that matter?"

At which remark Townsend considered it to be his turn to laugh, which he did ostentatiously; so pointedly, in fact, that Malpico's large and brilliant eyes suddenly grew dark, and contracted, though he still remained calm and smiling, as he said, again addressing Jerome: "Oh, of course, please don't think I claim to be a connoisseur, an expert. I'm only an amateur. I enjoy art not from the point of view of the critic—or the dealer—but for the fun of it; for the game."

"Ah, indeed?" said Anthony, who wondered why Malpico was keeping up a conversation which obviously was angering Townsend more and more. "Well, it's a pleasant side interest to a busy man, I have no doubt."

Malpico looked at him enigmatically, and replied: "Yes, and I could not avoid possessing such an interest, Mr. Jerome. It's a matter of inheritance. How strange, yet how powerful, indeed irresistible, are the things we derive from our ancestors! I descend from a family, Mr. Jerome, in which love for art has been a passion for centuries. And I greatly treasure my inheritance—everything that appertains to it, everything. We must talk about this further, some day, Mr. Jerome. Adios, for the present. Adios, for the present also, Mr. Townsend," continued Malpico, now openly laughing at the latter. "You are not keenly concerned with art, are you? No, of course not, for mines and mining are more in your natural bent, aren't they? *Si, si, si!*"

And throwing back his splendidly poised head upon his broad, lean shoulders, he laughed with rich relish, and went away, leaving Jerome startled and perplexed, and Townsend infuriated.

"Did you get that?" growled Townsend. "Mines! Why, that swine *stole* my mine, I tell you. Damn him!" he went on, slowly putting down his napkin, the wine in his angry blood violently boiling up into his head. "I won't stand for it. I'll go over there and tell him what I really think of him, and if he wants more than talk—I'm ready!"

And the big, burly man had heaved himself halfway to his feet before Anthony's hand reached his arm and jerked him back.

"Cut that out, Townsend," Jerome said sharply; "you can't afford to make trouble here—and I'm sure I can't. Keep your head. Pretty stuff for Mr. Stuyvesant to see in the papers tomorrow morning, wouldn't it, if you kick up a row?"

Townsend shot him an angry glare, from which, however, the red rage faded after a moment of rigid silence. "Of course you're right," he muttered thickly; "but I guess I had better move along out of here. That man raises the very devil in me. This is straight talk, Jerome—thank God I didn't have a gun, a moment ago!"

"There is something abnormally malignant in the man, Townsend," replied Jerome; "his good looks and polished manners hide a very rotten and evil insolence. He's playing a queer game. Evidently he knows something; but the question is, how much? And why is he letting us know he knows? It's up

to us to keep cool, and play our own end of the game. And don't let him spoil our evening."

"You're quite right," replied Townsend. "Let's see this act through and then beat it. We've got work ahead of us to figure out this new move."

Jerome nodded thoughtfully. "The thing's getting complicated," he said, and lighted a cigar and settled back.

There was a sibilant rustle and an eager putting of heads together among the drinkers and diners as the orchestra started an elusive-themed, slow prelude.

Evidently the chief feature of the evening's entertainment was at hand. Two waiters carried on the dancing floor something that looked like a block of white marble carved into the shape of a Grecian altar, though it was only wood, or papier-mâché. On this another waiter placed a tall, gilded, two-handled cup, or urn.

Tim Slater, the proprietor, a huge fat man, who had been hovering near, approached and pursed his thick lips gravely at Townsend, who knew him well.

"Don't be an easy mark, Mr. Townsend," he whispered; "don't let Black Pedro get your goat. I saw you when he made that crack, whatever it was, and you looked ugly. Excuse me for mentioning it, Mr. Townsend, but you're a good fellow, and Malpico ain't. Don't let him get your goat. I know about the bad blood between you, but forget it; life is too short to waste it on grouches, which burn a man up worse than booze. But, say, whenever you really feel you *must* get Malpico, go to it hard; and with my blessing—though not in my joint, please.

"If you want to see Black Pedro do a bit of squirming himself, watch him during this act. This girl picks him out every night, and I can't tell whether she hates him or wants to win him—but just you watch him. Black Pedro has run up against somebody, at last, who can do to him what he's been doing to other people, men and women both, up and down this coast for twenty years—playing with them for his own amusement. Just watch La Esmeralda make him squirm. It's rich."

From behind the curtain that hid the artists' dressing rooms, a tall, slender girl appeared. She was dressed in white, classical draperies. She bore on one shoulder, supported by her bare left arm, a golden-colored amphora. She was dusky, with downcast eyes, and a slight smile parted lips that were vividly red. She walked slowly and timidly to the altar, upon which she set the amphora. The music changed its character. The dance theme disappeared, and a theme suggestive of church music took its place. Quietly, and without any appearance of being observed, as if she were alone, in some still temple three thousand years distant in the recesses of forgotten time, the woman poured an amber-hued liquid from the amphora into the cup, and lifting the cup to her lips, she drank slightly, still with downcast eyes, and replaced the chalice on the altar.

Then for several moments she remained absolutely still; and the restaurant hushed its clatter and babble, as if under a spell.

Suddenly, and with a note of intense and subtle amusement, rich laughter bubbled from her slightly opened lips. Moving from her place, lightly and swiftly, she paced, like some wild creature in a cage, about the dancing floor, and studied her audience.

She stopped once or twice to look more attentively at this person or that, now a man, now a woman. It was as if she were a messenger of the unseen god of the strange temple which through the magic of her art she suggested, and was seeking the predestined one for whom her message was intended.

She was absolutely mistress of the situation. She had captured the entire attention of that assemblage of careless diners. Simple as were all her movements and gestures, there was the thought of an immense power held in reserve in that slender figure which seemed to palpitate with the intensity of its life. When she came opposite to Jerome and Townsend her eyes swept

the latter carelessly, and then rested upon Jerome. His own eyes met her gaze, and he felt pouring into him something like an electrical current of energy.

The girl's next stop was before Malpico's table. Jerome watched her intently, but he paid even more attention to Malpico.

Something very extraordinary was happening at that other table. The men with Malpico were but passive spectators, like all the others in the room; but Malpico had become an actor in the strange drama the girl was performing.

So far as Jerome could understand what he saw, he felt that he was witnessing a struggle between Malpico and the dancer; a combat of wills. She looked into the Mexican's face, and then deliberately and openly she sneered at him, with a rude, crude passion that would have been vulgar to the gutter level had it not been for the girl's intensity and her subtle strangeness.

Malpico, at first, merely laughed; quietly, yet not frankly. It was the laugh of a man uneasily on his guard against some hidden danger, and forcing himself to be nonchalant in appearance.

Then the girl smiled upon him. Leaning slightly forward, her tense figure vibrant, she yearned toward him, her lips wistful and moist, her eyes tender and dewy, her arms slowly raising, the hands opening toward him. And it was as if there was absolutely nobody present for her save Malpico. The Mexican grew pallid. His black brows gathered into a single bar as he struggled to maintain his composure.

But all at once the girl whirled around where she stood, ran swiftly to the altar, lifted the cup, drank eagerly, and began to dance.

The music crashed. There was the clashing of cymbals, the shaking of castanets, and a shrill rippling of a fife; while through all this throbbed the heavy, rich voices of oboes and bassoons and drums which seemed to repeat a phrase that reminded Jerome of the words of the ancient Dionysian orgies: *"Evoi! Evoi! Saboi!"*

Nothing like this strange, uncanny dance had ever been seen before, even in San Francisco. During the time in which the girl had been dancing in Tim Slater's the tables had all been engaged many days ahead. Night after night, her audiences of experienced pleasure seekers kept still like simple people attending their first, wonderful theatrical adventure. But the quality of their silence was not simple. They were like people held by some wizardry restored from some dark age of the world. There was a power in this strange dancer which was like the influence of black magic.

When the dance ended, the girl once more stood directly in front of Malpico. The latter, impassive now, but still pale, bowed to her inscrutably.

Immediately afterward, with eyes looking neither to right nor left, the woman swept behind the curtains, and a roaring of wild applause and of heady, excited voices, surcharged the dining hall.

"Come, Jerome, let's get out of here," said Townsend.

"With all my heart, yes," said Anthony.

And they left the place at once. It was long after midnight. As they turned into a street in the heart of the commercial quarter of the city, not far from the crooked alleys among which Tim Slater maintained his unique house of entertainment, a young man with a silky black mustache and olive-colored face whispered to two other men who stood with him in a doorway. A minute later, Jerome and Townsend turned at the sound of following footsteps, and the foremost of the men behind them stopped quickly, and held up an automatic revolver.

"Turn over what you've got!" he said. "And damned quick."

Townsend flashed a look around the street. Under the flooding moonlight it showed itself silent and deserted.

"We're up against it," he said quietly. And he reached toward his pocket.

"No!" said the man with the re-

volver. "Hands up. We'll save you the trouble."

One of his companions advanced and rapidly and systematically took from both men their watches and their money. Neither had more than a few dollars left, for their preparations for the evening's fun had been far from extravagant, and neither were of the type who bejewel their persons, so they let the little spoils go without much sense of loss, though filled with the hot, helpless anger which unarmed men feel against a weaponed thief. Especially did they experience this hot anger when the silent young man who was going through their pockets with practiced fingers, throwing on the ground what he did not want, placed in his own pockets all the papers he found.

"Those are nothing but private letters, my friend, I give you my word," said Townsend.

"So are mine," added Jerome.

There was no reply, but, having finished his job, the thief backed off, and the man with the pistol whistled. A motor car came around the corner. Under cover of the revolver, the holdup men entered the car, and immediately it jumped away, and whirled around the nearest corner at high speed.

"Lose much?" queried Townsend.

"Only a few dollars, and a cheap traveling watch," answered Jerome.

"They didn't sting me bad, either," said Townsend; "but those chaps weren't after that stuff——"

"Obviously not," interrupted Jerome; "the papers are what mattered to them. This is part of our friend Malpico's game. He's certainly playing it fast and furious."

"And throwing a lot of the cards on the table," commented Townsend. "Do you understand his play?"

"Not I, as yet, though I think I'm beginning to see a little light," replied Anthony.

"That's more than I do except, of course, the plain, staring fact that Malpico knows a lot more than we supposed."

Jerome nodded gravely.

"Well, the papers I had were of no account."

"Nor mine," returned Anthony; but, as he spoke, his mind went back to the neglected warning of the evening before, and he hastened his pace.

"Well, our adventures are beginning fairly early," he remarked.

"Being stuck up by holdup men, right in Montgomery Street, isn't adventure," retorted Townsend. "For me, anyhow, it's a disgrace. If it got into the papers, I'd be guyed to death by my friends. So don't say anything at the hotel, for the reporters might get hold of something. By the way," he added, "one of the men dining with Malpico is a newspaper man. Malpico is a wise guy, I'll give him credit for that; and he often works the press to his own advantage. Well, Jerome, we've lots of new matter to think about, haven't we? I'll call for you about ten o'clock, shall I? We must get together with Captain Delamere, again, and plan our next moves. Good night."

And Townsend took a taxi at the door of Jerome's hotel, and sped away.

"Just a moment, Mr. Jerome," said the night clerk when Anthony asked for his key; "Mr. Lewis, the manager, wants to see you; he's been waiting up for your arrival. Front, tell Mr. Lewis that Mr. Jerome is here."

"I think I know what's happened," thought Jerome, with a troubled smile.

He was joined immediately by Manager Lewis, who drew him into his private office.

"I am very much annoyed," he began, "to be obliged to tell you that during your absence your room was burglarized. The thing was discovered by the maid on that floor, who was so sure she had seen you going out that, when she heard movements in your room, she telephoned the house detective. Unfortunately, the latter was not at once available, and the thief left the room while the maid was at the phone, presumably, and got away safely; but the room showed plain evidences of his work."

"Well, I'm sorry you worried about the matter," said Jerome, lightly. "I've

lost no valuables for I carry none when I travel. I've learned that much wisdom, anyhow."

"I wish all our guests were as wise," said the relieved manager. But as Anthony nodded and went on his way to his room, he felt sure, in his heart, that he had lost something more valuable than many material things; he had lost an important trick in the game he was playing, and had lost it, he knew, through his own fault.

The visit of burglars to his room was part of the holdup in the street. It was plain that Malpico was taking every possible means to obtain knowledge of all the secrets of Anthony's mission. Jerome was up against an opponent whose energy fairly blazed; and he was humiliated bitterly, in that moment of defeat, by the remembrance of his own careless handling of his trust. It had been a blunder of the first magnitude to leave his code message, containing the full account of his conference with Townsend and Delamere, in the room.

As he knew would be the case, all the papers—the code message, and the message in plain English from which it had been formed, together with Mr. Stuyvesant's telegram—were gone.

Anthony turned from the writing table, and walked up and down his room. Passing his bureau he caught sight of his face, and he shook his fist disgustedly and gloomily at the handsome, boyish, but wine-flushed, image reflected in the mirror.

There had been other times than this, he recalled with a bitter pang, when his tendency for pleasure had brought business defeats, or troubles; things at which Oliver Stuyvesant had chosen to smile indulgently, remembering his own youth, perhaps; but there is a fitting time, and a bad time also, for all things under the sun, and this was no time to let his bohemianism interfere with his duty.

He owed too much to Oliver Stuyvesant to be playing fast and loose. Pacing up and down the room, he thought back to the time Mr. Stuyvesant had taken an interest in him, when other men, including most of his own immediate family, had given him up. They had tried to force him into business or professional channels for which he had no natural aptitude discoverable. Oliver Stuyvesant had recognized the inborn liking for art which was Anthony's, and had given him his opportunity to make it of practical service. And he knew that it was up to him to make good, now that Oliver Stuyvesant was pursuing the most beloved of all the diverse interests of his picturesque and beneficial career.

Anthony also knew that his own future was bound up with this matter. Oliver Stuyvesant had no heir, save the public, toward which, with a keen sense of splendid, unselfish patriotism he felt that he owed a duty, and to that public it was his intention to leave the bulk of his vast possessions in art. But there was his great business to be considered, and his general estate; and these, as Anthony knew, might be his own, if Oliver Stuyvesant so chose. And Oliver Stuyvesant would so choose, if he believed that Anthony was man enough to cut out the reckless side of his character, and show himself worthy of high responsibilties.

And in this, the most important mission ever intrusted to him, Anthony had failed, at the very outset; not irredeemably, not fatally; but most seriously; simply through lack of concentration, and the selfish indulgence of his own whim.

Malpico, smiling and disdainful, came before his mental vision; Malpico, the incarnation of the spirit of evil pride and selfishness; the man who had ruined Townsend's life, and filled his heart with the poison of bitter hatred; who had wronged Captain Delamere; and who now had crossed his path, and the path of Oliver Stuyvesant. Anthony felt a loathing within him, as the mental picture of the stalwart, powerful, handsome Mexican flashed before him; like a close-up on a moving-picture screen. Malpico was vibrant, through all his corruption and evil, with a strange and potent fascination; which was, perhaps, the emanation of his other, and better self, the self which

he had given over into the bondage of the bad.

Jerome smiled a little bitterly as he recalled an old saying: "There, but for the grace of God, go I." Yet it was very appropriate, he felt. He, too, like Malpico, whose charm he was keenly conscious of, had within him two opposing tendencies. Whichever one he chose, would control his life. Every time he obeyed the behests of one or the other, the one which he obeyed grew stronger.

He must choose, sooner or later, in a final manner. Why not make the decision now?

Turning from the mirror, with a clenched fist shaken once more at his own reflection, Anthony grimly muttered: "Round number one has gone badly against you, my friend. All the points are scored for Malpico. Very well, then—for the rest of the scrap, fight like the devil to make up for lost ground."

Paradoxically, however, Jerome really didn't mean that he meant to fight like the devil. As a matter of fact, in that moment, near the dawn of a new day, as he made his deep decision of soul, he ranged himself on the side of the angels—the good angels which men must serve if they would really be true men, in no matter what field of fighting—the angels of duty, of devotion to a trust, of loyalty and vigilant purpose.

CHAPTER VI.

SENOR MALPICO MARRIES.

Three mornings later, there came a telegram from Oliver Stuyvesant, saying he would leave for San Francisco that day, and to rush all preparations for the voyage.

As Jerome passed on to the hotel dining room for his breakfast, after reading the message, he was joined by Townsend, in whose face there was a flare of excitement.

"Have you seen the papers?" he cried.

"Not yet," said Anthony; "why?"

Townsend thrust one of the morning newspapers before Jerome's eyes, pointing to a column on the shipping page.

"Remember what I told you on the night of the holdup?" he said; "that one of the men with Malpico was a newspaper reporter? Well, here's the result. Come on, let's get a quiet table, over in the corner, for, believe me, we've got some important conference work ahead of us. How the deuce we are going to figure out Malpico's tactics beats me, I'll confess. Is the man crazy, do you think? Or what the devil is he driving at?"

"It's queer, mighty queer," admitted Jerome.

Indeed, the very headlines of the article bristled with shocks to the two men as they sat with their heads together over the paper, while a waiter went for coffee and things to eat:

NEW YORK MILLIONAIRE FINANCING VOYAGE TO SEEK TREASURE ON TIBURON.

FAMOUS CAPTAIN DELAMERE IN COMMAND.

Carefully Chosen Soldiers of Fortune are Engaged.

HOPE TO FIND GREAT MASTERPIECE.

Romantic Legend of Lost Painting of Velasquez.

CLASH EXPECTED WITH MEXICAN EXPEDITION.

Another chapter in the history of San Francisco's many treasure-hunting expeditions is now being prepared.

Facts have leaked out from the carefully guarded headquarters of the expedition, and from other sources exclusively made known to the *Daily News*, which indicate that the most romantic and important effort to locate lost treasure which has ever been attempted on this coast is being financed by a New York millionaire, internationally famous in art circles.

His agents are now in San Francisco, and have engaged the services of the notorious Captain Jasper Delamere, the man who defied the Russian government in many profitable seal-hunting trips, and who has figured in South American and Central American adventures galore.

Captain Delamere is busily preparing his seagoing steam yacht, the *Roving Lass*, for a long voyage. When he began to sign on his crew, during the last two days, it was given out that the *Roving Lass* was being

chartered for a pleasure cruise in South American waters by a party of New Yorkers, one of whom, Anthony Jerome, is now at the St. Francis Hotel, and is the chief agent of the New York millionaire, whose name is for the present withheld. Those who were acquainted with Captain Delamere and his record, however, smiled at the idea of him undertaking anything so mild and commonplace as a pleasure cruise, and it soon became apparent to the wiseacres along Front Street that the shipping of the crew of the *Roving Lass* was being conducted in a manner far different from that usually followed.

Green hands and lubbers were not even considered. Only the pick of the most adventurous men in San Francisco, sailors and landsmen, too, were signed. There are probably more two-handed gunmen well used to the saddle along the Mexican border in Texas and Arizona than there are seamen in the outfit; which, however, includes at least a dozen experienced sailormen, besides the engineering force. Altogether, Captain Jasper Delamere is at the had of as efficient a band of dare-devils as ever enlisted under the black flag of Captain Kidd.

It is even said that among the goods taken on board were several machine guns and small-caliber cannon, with their ammunition; though this report is bluntly denied by the customs officers. The rumor, however, persists, and it lends some color to another theory, which seeks to discount the treasure-island story, and claims that Delamere's real object is to enlist his company of scrappers, in the army of a new revolution, which is being stirred up by certain American financiers.

But Señor Pedro Malpico, the prominent west-coast capitalist, now in San Francisco, when interviewed, said that he doubted that Captain Delamere had revolutionary intentions, though such a theory might be plausible, and he himself would take measures, if necessary, to put the governmental authorities of Sonora and Sinaloa, the northernmost Mexican states, on their guard.

Señor Malpico added that the expedition probably was seeking the pirate treasures supposed to have been cached somewhere up the Gulf of California—the most desolate and little-known body of water and of blazing deserts left in the world to-day. Traditions of the pirate treasures of the Gulf are to be found in La Paz and Mazatlan and other ports. One of the most interesting of the legends, he stated, concerned an ancestor of his, Count Mestres, Viceroy of Mexico in the time of King Philip IV., whose ship was seized and looted by the famous English pirate, Captain John Cromwell. Gold, silver, and art objects, ecclesiastical vessels, and a masterpiece of portraiture by Velasquez, a painting of the second wife of the King of Spain, Mariana of Austria, were seized by Cromwell, and hidden away, it is supposed, in one of his secret caches. These things have been sought by descendants of the Count de Mestres ever since that time, and, as the last of the family, Señor Pedro Malpico says that he would lay claim to anything now discovered that belonged to his ancestor. He states that he may even equip an expedition of his own to seek the lost treasures.

"Well, this is a strange move, most certainly," said Jerome, deeply perplexed. "How do you figure it out, Townsend?"

"I can't," frankly admitted the local agent; "that is, not satisfactorily, though there are several points that occur to me as possible clews. But that story isn't Malpico's only bid for public fame this morning," Townsend went on, opening another newspaper; "why, the fellow must have hired a press agent. It beats me!"

Whereupon he pointed to a paragraph in the theatrical and society section of the paper, which ran as follows:

MEXICAN MINING MAGNATE WEDS FAMOUS DANCER.

Pedro Malpico, Well-known Mazatlan Financier, Wins Heart of Reigning Sensation of the White Light World.

All the highways and the byways, especially the byways, of San Francisco's bohemian and theatrical circles, are buzzing with gossip concerning the swift and passionate romance which involves Señor Pedro Malpico, the Mexican millionaire, known in San Francisco, as well as New York and Paris, as one of the most liberal patrons of nocturnal amusements of all sorts, and La Esmeralda, the dancer of the celebrated Dance of the Will-to-Power, who has nightly excited great crowds of diners in Tim Slater's cabaret.

It has been known for many years that Señor Malpico was a confirmed and avowed champion of bachelorhood. But ever since the advent of La Esmeralda, Malpico has been a regular attendant at Slater's cabaret, and it has been known among his friends that he was paying ardent court to the mysterious young girl, to whom huge sums have been offered by various Eastern managers since her sensational début in this city.

The climax of the romance came several nights ago, after La Esmeralda had danced in her most fascinating manner—in the way which caused a great European writer, who saw her some weeks ago, to declare that she is the actual embodiment of the dream of the German philosopher, Nietzsche, namely, the incarnation, in the figure of a perfect dancer, of a human will devoted supremely

to the attainment of personal power. It was noticed that Señor Malpico was deeply impressed by La Esmeralda's wonderful interpretation, and the next day he and the dancer were married before a justice of the peace. She has left the stage, and will accompany her husband to Mazatlan on the *City of Sydney*, which sails to-morrow.

"Well, I can't say I'm much interested in Malpico's love affairs," was Anthony's comment, as he tossed the paper down; "but this other thing is a bombshell."

"There's more to the love affair, also, than appears on the surface," declared Townsend. "That's why I showed it to you. I met Delamere in the street the other night, and who do you think he was putting into a cab? This dancer."

"I dare say the lady hasn't given all her heart to Malpico," said Anthony; "and as for the captain—well, old sailors are famous for philandering."

"Jerome," asserted Townsend, earnestly; "it's not so simple as all that. There's something queer, mighty queer, about the whole business, and it worries me."

"I can't see it," averred Anthony. "You don't think that Captain Delamere isn't on the level, do you—I mean, with us? Because, if you have any reason for that view, now's the time to come out with it."

"No, I haven't the least suspicion of Delamere," positively declared Townsend. "But there is some mysterious link connecting Delamere and that dancing girl. I saw both their faces when they were talking the other night. Delamere looked troubled, and upset; but not like a man who was being turned down for another man. And the girl was—well, I can't easily describe her looks; but they were not the looks of a girl who was in love with any man; she was white like a ghost, and her eyes were blazing like a panther's. Well, I give it up. It's too much for me. I tried to draw Delamere into a chat about La Esmeralda, when I met him the next day; but he froze up at once. Wouldn't as much as let on he'd ever seen or heard of her."

Anthony still shrugged his shoulders at Townsend's views; for to him this was a simple matter, and not worth bothering about.

"How about this other thing, this claim of Malpico's to the picture?" he said. "Do you suppose there is any truth in his yarn about being a descendant of Viceroy Mestres?"

"No; I think it's pure bluff," said Townsend. "Somehow, he's got on to what Mr. Stuyvesant is after, and so he's getting his lines out himself. That's straight talk he gave you the other night, about his love for art. Malpico has a wonderful collection in his house in Mazatlan; the old palace of the Spanish governors. And it would be just like him to want the Velasquez more than the rest of the treasure—though you bet he'll grab that, too, if he can. But why he gives his game away like this, in a newspaper, too, is beyond me to guess. I think the rest of his play is pretty plain. He's sailing to-morrow for Mazatlan. He will simply watch us, now. He'll know when we sail; he will learn when we enter the Gulf, and he will stick around, just out of sight somewhere, to see if we get the loot—and then it'll be his cue to step forward."

"We must do what we can to match his moves," said Anthony. "First of all, you must instruct your agent in Mazatlan to investigate the Malpico ancestry. Mr. Stuyvesant will be worried about his claim to descent from the viceroy; for, according to his belief, the last Mestres died in New York twenty years ago, and willed his claim to the Velasquez painting to him. But if Malpico is really a descendant, from some Mexican branch of the family, it may cause trouble."

"I'll write to-day, for the mail goes to-morrow on the *City of Sydney*," said Townsend.

"Is there any way of reaching Mazatlan by wire, wireless, or cable?"

"All forms of communication are very uncertain, since the revolution," replied Townsend; "but we may be able to cable, in a roundabout way."

"All right, try that, and get your letter ready, but don't mail it."

"No?"

"No. I'll personally take charge of it," said Anthony. "I'm going down with Malpico on the *City of Sydney*. He's put things all over me so far, in this game, and I don't like it. We will confer with Delamere right after breakfast, and arrange where the *Roving Lass* shall pick me up, either at Mazatlan, or, if Delamere thinks it better, for fear of Malpico trying to detain the boat at Mazatlan, at Guaymas, or La Paz. I want to stick right close on Malpico's trail for a while. I am worried about this suddenly announced pedigree of his, though I think it's quite clear why he flashed the thing in the papers."

"Well, that's more than I can see," declared Townsend. "I wish you would put me wise."

"I think it's just sheer devilry. Malpico does everything he does with a view to extracting keen sensations from them," answered Anthony. "He likes excitement. He's brimming over with Satanic pride, and vanity. He wants to bewilder us, and fool us, and do things that we haven't figured on, in a wild game of brag and boast. He's a savage superman, this Malpico—with his Spanish blood, and probably more than a dash of wild Indian—who has read Nietzsche and thinks he's the big boss of the Pacific coast. Well if he's the superman, I intend to make my present place of underman useful for a while, and keep as close to him as if I were his shadow."

Townsend thoughtfully eyed Anthony. "Your idea is pretty good," he said. "But you're taking big chances. And don't carry your gun in your suit case, see?"

TO BE CONTINUED.

There will be another new serial in the August 20th POPULAR. It is by Howard Fielding, whose complete novel in this issue ought to be the best recommendation of the forthcoming story.

THE APPRECIATIVE MR. MILLER

HENRY MILLER, the theatrical producer, is amply endowed with the artistic temperament—and every artistic temperament carries with it an explosive temper. Miller's friends know this, and at times get a lot of fun out of witnessing the explosions.

On one occasion two of them were with Miller in a taxicab one afternoon, hurrying to a theater in Philadelphia. The streets were covered with sleet, the party was already late for an appointment, and progress was slow. Suddenly, as such things happen, the taxi skidded, turned a semicircle in the middle of the street, and came to a standstill, facing in the direction opposite to that in which they had been going.

Miller lunged forward and stuck his head out of the window. The temperamental explosion was due! Instead of which, Miller, in a voice which he held down to a low, clear note, said to the chauffeur:

"The skid's clever."

BUY FOR A RISE

THERE is no cause for alarm when Liberty Bonds sell below par on the Stock Exchange. The decline is temporary—bound to go to par and above after the war. With the entire credit and national wealth of the United States behind these bonds, the decline is purely technical, produced entirely by the general condition of the money market. The same factories, farms, mines, oil wells and so on backing them, on which they represent a mortgage, still exist. They were there when the bonds were floated at par, and there has been no change when the quotation drops to, say, 94.

The bonds of a first-power nation usually slump in war time; and just as surely recover and pass par after the end of the war.

Take British consols, until this war the prevalent world's standard of securities. During the Napoleonic wars, they declined steadily. Quoted at 97 in 1702, by 1708 they were down to 47¼. In 1852 the same bonds were at 102. The Crimean War pulled them to 85⅜; then they steadily advanced to 111½.

Japan in 1899 floated a huge loan in London at 90; a year later these bonds brought 105; the Russo-Japanese War caused them to drop to 97½, later to rise with the coming of peace.

United States 6's of 1858 were quoted as high as 109½ in 1860; the Civil War slumped them to 85 in 1862; in 1863 they were back in the running at 127—worth $1.27 on the dollar.

The Spanish-American War, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, brought similar disturbances to the bond markets.

Almost invariably, bonds decline in war time. Just as surely, they rise to par—and above—with the coming of peace, when backed by a power of such enormous resources as the United States.

Remember that any decline will be only temporary, that it will be but a short time till you can cash in at a good profit. The whole wealth of the United States is behind every dollar's worth of Liberty Bonds you buy; that backing—farms, factories, mines—will continue to exist; the decline in curb quotations is a reflection of the general condition of the money market and not on the security behind the bonds.

THE ANCIENT ENEMY

ONE of the pleasant by-products of an otherwise hideous war is the better understanding now in process between England and our country. There are two steps in forming a friendship. The first is intellectual understanding. The second is emotional liking. The product of the two is good will and friendship. "Pilgrim Clubs" and "Colonies" and visiting statesmen and officials try by flattery to take the second step before they take the first. International banquets glow with kindliness, but nothing results. That is because the hard, dull brainwork of understanding has been omitted.

At last we are going about the job in the proper way. The American army and the British army are exchanging speakers who tell large audiences of soldiers about the other fellow—what sort of nation he belongs to, what he likes, the schools and newspapers which instruct him, the ideas and ideals he carries. About twenty speakers have already been at work in the war zone.

We give the experience of one, but it is typical. The man is Professor Wilson Naylor, of Lawrence College, Wisconsin. He has recently been speaking to the British army. Blackboards announce the subject as "America." The chairman steps up into the canteen, and says that a real live Yank is going to tell "Why America came into the war so late."

As soon as Professor Naylor stood up before the five hundred Tommies, a soldier spoke from the center of the hut, emphasizing his remark by knocking ashes from his pipe:

"Yes, three years too late."

"My opinion, too," replied Naylor, and asked the men if they knew of the Tommy who, seeing one of the American Atlas trucks, named it "At last."

The audience gave him nearly an hour to tell of home conditions. Then he put the question to the house:

"Now, suppose you Englishmen could take our places in America, tell me whether you think that you would have got into the war any sooner than we did."

Every time every audience came back with a unanimous "No." Each time the men called "Go on." Each time, when the speaker finished, he had to come back for a few more remarks. As for the Australians, they jumped up, waved their hats, stamped and cheered like a heavy cannon barrage ripped through with machine-gun fire.

When "this blithering, perishing war" is over, we are going to have more friends in the world than we ever had before. Among the stanchest will be the "blasted Britishers."

TIME CLOCKS

THIS time clock was introduced, not by the devil, as popularly believed, but to prevent loating. The idea was advanced, and employers speedily grasped its psychology, that workmen would complete each job and start a new process faster when their record was registered by minutes.

The Standard Oil Company requires its drivers to weigh their horses monthly and mail report to 26 Broadway. Every driver, naturally, figures that John D. Rockefeller may by chance pick up his card and—well, Standard Oil horses are never neglected or abused.

Originally introduced as a slave driver, the time clock speedily dropped into its natural function—automatic bookkeeping.

Striking an average from cards over a length of time, the business man established standards of output thereafter required of all.

But the time clock soon taught the general manager to watch his machines also. When seemingly good machinery is junked or sold secondhand, you can safely wager that the Great Business Detective, the time clock, has shown it up as inefficient and to be displaced by newer machines that will more efficiently utilize the operator's time and earn greater profits on each dollar invested.

With the coming of scientific management, the time clock became invaluable. The workers ringing up cards have slight conception of all the bell registers. The cards will be grouped, studied, analyzed by a cost clerk; the results charted and placed before the boss.

More efficiency discoveries have been made through the time clock than by any other agency—personal or mechanical.

A striking illustration is the report of a body of efficiency engineers who recently studied conditions in thousands of factories to determine the cost of hiring and firing men.

The astounding discovery was made that an average of seventy-three per cent were new employees as compared with the year before.

The cost of breaking in new men to replace old employees grown expert by long service, time cards revealed, average $34.85. One manufacturer's cards, under analysis, showed his profits reduced nearly $150,000 by the departure and replacing of one thousand employees.

Here is a tremendous economic loss, taking the country as a whole, due largely to a growing tendency to drift from one job to another instead of sticking to the old post year after year as formerly.

Two million men have been taken from production for the army and navy. To replace them will cost seventy million dollars.

STANDARD SIZES

A TENNESSEE negro, drafted for the National Army, was sent home from camp because the quartermaster's department was unable to find shoes large enough to fit him. Size fifteen, the largest available, could not be slipped on even with a shoe horn.

The draft has turned up quite a few physical freaks, including men with twelve fingers or toes, and a number with hearts on the wrong side.

It is peculiar, how much we are alike. Genuine physical freaks are extremely rare. Nature has four or five molds and shapes millions from them before producing an odd size.

The tendency to symmetry or standardization in production seems to be a fundamental creative law. We find it all through nature; various creatures appear to be about the same size and weight when matured—such as sea gulls, ants, cows, sparrows.

Standardization is so basic and prevalent in the physical world that it is strange man did not apply it to manufacturing until as late as 1802. In that year the first interchangeable parts were produced—for Springfield rifles, to permit prompt and economical repairs in the field instead of shipping the rifles back to the armories.

Uniformity in human structure has always existed, though scientists incline to the belief that men and women formerly were much larger. "There were giants in those days." M. Henrion figured that Eve must have been 118 feet

9 inches tall. But the tallest man on record, whose skeleton has actually been preserved, or about whom reliable figures exist, was Josef Winkelmaier, an 8-foot-7-inch Austrian freak famous in the dime museums of twenty-five years ago. Even Chang, the Barnum Chinese giant, measured only 7 feet 10 inches. Hassan Ali, a side-show freak of 8 feet 2 inches, claimed his grandfather had been 9 inches taller, but the figure was never authenticated. Ella Ewing, 8 feet 3 inches in height, who died a few years ago, held the record for feminine growth.

One of Charles Lamb's best essays tells of a certain "Widow Blacket" with whom he spent "many an agreeable holiday"—though she wore a No. 24 shoe.

CLACKERS FOR BABIES

AMERICAN soldiers in France call the copper ten and five-centime pieces big and little "clackers." To the boys they are only troublesome "cart wheels" to be left on the counter when given in change. For this reason a writer, who has been working in several army camps, put up "clacker boxes" to receive such refuse money. Two neat little sums have emerged from the boxes for the benefit of the babies in uninvaded Belgium. In acknowledgment this letter has come:

Will you be my interpreter, and thank your United States army boys for their kind remembrance of my poor little victims of the war? Tell them that their first three hundred francs and now four hundred and twenty-one francs have helped much to make our special little victim happy.

She was buried under the ruins of three houses for forty-one hours, and we got her out alive. Her father and mother, and others, were all killed. She is now the queen of my kitchen, where she lords it over us all, but we can refuse her nothing until the ghastly wounds in her head are healed and she is a little consolée for the loss of her parents.

Some people have short memories where the poor Belgians are concerned, but you and I have lived with them in their ruined homes and we *can't* forget.

One night a "clacker box" containing twenty francs was stolen. It caused great indignation among the soldiers. Another box was created swiftly, and at the same moment hands sought pockets and came out with silver pieces. Corporal O'Neil gave ten francs. Anonymous letters came with money for the babies. One read:

Will you please put the inclosed with your Belgian Baby Fund? I wish I could give more, but am so situated financially that I cannot.

The amount was five francs.

Another note brought two francs and ten centimes. It said:

For your Belgian Baby Fund.

Buy some crackers
With my clackers.

POPULAR TOPICS

ORTHOPEDIC prothesis is the scientific term for the making of artificial limbs, and it is an art that has come to astounding perfection during four years of warfare. Under the leadership of Doctor Jules Amar, the French surgeons led the way, and British, Canadian, and American surgeons have been worthy followers. Men who have lost both arms are now able to write, dress themselves, and operate a typewriter by the means of marvelous mechanical hands. It is the aim of the scientific miracle workers to give every disabled man adequate substitutes for his lost members.

AMONG the noble army of Red Cross Samaritans there is an old lady who is nearly eighty years of age. Her name is Mademoiselle Rachel Castri. She is a Frenchwoman who served in Paris as a nurse during the Franco-Prussian War, and was attached to the American Ambulance Corps at that time. She is an inspiration to her associates to-day. Not long ago Mademoiselle Castri said: "When the conflict is over, the glory of America's womanhood will have attained a new brilliance, and the entire civilized world will pay homage to her."

FRANKLIN K. LANE, secretary of the interior, asked Congress to appropriate $50,000,000 to stimulate the mining of metals needed in the manufacture of war materials. Among these are manganese, pyrite, tungsten, antimony, platinum, mercury, graphite, and tin. All are to be found in this country, but are being imported at the rate of 2,000,000 tons annually.

BUSINESS literature is comparatively a new thing. Prior to twenty years ago there was nothing known of the kind. To-day there are thousands of books on the subject of business and its successful promotion. Formerly it was considered the proper and wise course that a business man keep to himself the secrets of his rise to power. But in this larger day an apprentice can digest a whole library of books by high authorities on the trade or profession he has chosen.

FROM government reports we gather that for five years ending February, 1918, food increased in price sixty-six per cent, every article advancing more than forty per cent. How hard this is on laboring thousands may be gleaned from the fact that while one-third of the working families report increased wages, two-thirds report them stationary or decreased.

THERE is never any way to account for Russia," said Lady Muriel Paget, on her return from that perplexing country, "for it is an Alice-in-the-looking-glass land. Everything is wrong side round, or seems so to us." Of the Bolsheviki she said: "They will murder a man one day, and feel poignant pity for his widow the next day. They have intense ideals of democracy, but they are without any practical knowledge of dealing with democracy. 'Committees' is a magic word which the Bolshevik believes will open every door for him. There are committees for everything. But, in some mysterious way, things keep on in Russia."

THE KEHILLA, a Jewish organization, has lately published a "Register," which is a sort of Hebrew Domesday Book. From its 1,500 pages of statistical information, it appears that there are 1,500,000 Jews in New York City, making it the largest Jewish city in the world, Warsaw not excepted. About $17,500,000 is spent annually by them in furthering their communal life.

ONE of the most curious exemptions on the military records comes from England, where a man described as "a specialist in the construction of padded cells" was freed of military duty because of the "urgent orders" awaiting him, and because "there is not a man in Great Britain who can take the place of this applicant."

Judging Men Who Want Jobs

By James Hay, Jr.
Author of "Increase Your Punch," Etc.

A study of men from the standpoint of an employer. If you look for work in vain, or lose a job without knowing why, this bit of confidence may put you wise

THE general manager of a big corporation, whose business it is to employ hundreds of men every year for his company, showed me recently the little book of rules governing his selection and classification of men as to their usefulness and ability. What I read in that book demonstrated to me why certain men are forever out of permanent employment. Incidentally, it indicated how the "unfortunates" may brace up and find good jobs.

"I'm not the only employer who goes by those rules," the general manager told me. "Nowadays, anybody who has to hire men for big or little jobs is guided by these tests. We have drawn on experience and on the teachings of psychology for the information which will enable us to choose wisely and to avoid as far as possible the mistake of cluttering up the pay roll with incompetents. We no longer rely on intuition or personal likes and dislikes. We have the indisputable, never-failing data to back us up."

That is, there are men who go into offices and shops to apply for jobs or positions and, just as they are asking for what they want, exhibit little habits or eccentricities which make it impossible for them to get a chance to work. There is something appalling in that thought. At least, it would be appalling were it not for the fact that men can rid themselves of these failings. That is why I think it worth while to set forth what was in the little book.

As I studied the rules, it occurred to me that it would be a good thing for the man who is thinking of changing his job to apply to his proposed new employer the same tests that this employer puts on him. It is a poor rule that does not work both ways. An unreliable employer is as bad as an untrustworthy employee.

Here is a list of the kinds of men that corporation refuses to employ:

The boasters; the professionally restless and the industrially restless; those who pose as humorists; the unhappily married; the "up-and-downers;" the "place seekers;" those who try to impress others with their dominance, "force" and ruthless pugnacity; the extremely diffident; the cynics and snobs; those who indulge in ornate, "flourishy" handwriting; the conceited; the flatterers; those who try to build up mystery as to their plans and motives; money spenders on a lavish scale; the narrow-minded and the "reformers;" the superstitious; the nonpunctual.

And here are some of the reasons, stated in brief, why such men are not wanted by Big Business:

If the applicant boasts about his business success in the past, or his ability as a getter of results, you know immediately that he is untrustworthy, because at heart he is not satisfied either with his true record or with his real innate ability. He feels the need of arousing your interest by proclaiming an excellence he knows he does not possess. The braggart always knows that his powers are so small as to need artificial advertisement.

The restless man, one who jumps from job to job without apparent reason, is a man who will never "stick." Such fellows come under the general

category of those who, with a surprising wealth of resources in the way of aptitude, show nevertheless an amazing poverty of results. They are not possessed of the stamina necessary for achieving solid results.

They are aware of this themselves. They cannot put their hearts into anything. They are brilliant victims of the fever for change and variety. And they know that, as they have passed up other jobs, they are liable to pass up your employment at any time.

The professional humorist, the man who is always trying to make others laugh, attempts to get a double value out of the passing moment. At heart, he is dissatisfied with himself. He turns from the serious to the flippant side of affairs to compensate himself for not having adjusted himself in a profitable manner to the biggest problems of existence. Being unable to applaud himself for real success, he accepts as a substitute the laughter and applause of those for whose amusement he uses up his energy and brains.

The professional humorist has within him a tragedy, a sense of inadequacy, which some day will result in his collapse as a thinker and worker. Human nature is sensitive to such facts. Nobody really respects the "village cut-up" and the "smart Aleck."

Unhappily married men are not desired for any sort of work. This is true of the manual laborers, because they generally take to drink or gambling. It is particularly true of the men higher up, those who have to use their brains. Employers do not want to depend on brains that are scrambled in the morning by a "scene" at the breakfast table, and lacerated in the evening by discontent and inability to rest at home.

The "up-and-downers" are those who gravitate rapidly between fits of optimism and attacks of pessimism. One morning they are convinced that they and the business in which they are engaged are headed for dazzling success. This is no theatric pose on their part. They really believe it. The next morning they feel that they are of no particular value and that their business is no good.

Obviously, they are utterly unreliable. No employer can depend on them when it comes to mapping out a long and serious campaign of work. Their optimism is always misleading because it is so excessive. Their pessimism is just so much lost money and time.

Chronic "place seekers" make up another class of those who inwardly realize their inferiority. The places they seek are elective in organizations, or honorary, or appointments to public office. Often the jobs they look for in this way pay less than they earn in their professions or industries. Their friends often say:

"What on earth did he want that for? He makes more money than that salary now."

He wanted it because, in receiving the homage, great or small, which is supposed to go with "a place of prominence," he is consoling himself for his innate inferiorities by saying to the world:

"Behold me, lifted up to a place of prominence and importance! This proves that I'm a pretty big fellow, after all."

Your place seeker, like the professional humorist, is looking for a double value because at heart he knows he is not reliable.

There has come into fashion recently the "man with a punch," the "fellow with the bulldog jaw." Consequently, the streets are crowded with those who make a great parade of their "force," their "dominance," their "pugnacity."

As a matter of fact, the really strong and dominating man is, generally speaking, quite an inoffensive and quiet-looking gentleman. He does not make a habit of pounding a desk with his clenched fist, or shouting at the top of his voice, or kicking over a chair as an emphasis of what he will do.

Those who indulge in this tempestuous ceremonial are the blusterers, the bluffs. Their realization that they are weak is exactly what prompts them to try to convince you that they are towers of strength.

The extremely diffident man is one who is acutely aware of either his incapacity to do what he wants to do or his inability to get along easily with other men. The bashful fellow frequently does good work so long as he is watched and has a chief over him. He cannot be put into a place of responsibility with profit to either himself or his employer. He knows he hasn't the necessary confidence. Knowing this, he is afraid even to try to exercise initiative.

No live undertaking has a place for cynics and snobs. These gentry are always bored. When a man admits that he is bored, he confesses his failure to adjust himself properly to the world. Cynicism and snobbery are merely lack of interest, loss of enterprise.

Handwriting that is full of flourishes and "curlicues" is an unconscious bid for notice or notoriety. It denotes a willingness to waste time and effort in the hope of being considered original or "striking." Back of the flourishy writing is the same bizarre mental make-up that prompts "loud" clothes, loud laughter in public and any effort to attract attention undeservedly.

Your conceited employee is always, in his own mind, the center of the world, the king-pin of the works. He looks at everything thus: "What will this mean for me?" He does it because self-conceit is invariably an overwhelming and incessant consciousness of self, and a desire to minister to self.

And this explains the universal prejudice against "stuck-up" men. Associates realize that they do not give back to the world the interest and consideration they get from the world.

Flatterers are undesirable people in any shop for two reasons. First, they rely on their insincerity, instead of their ability, to retain their positions. Second, it is from this class that all the "office politicians" and internal trouble makers are drawn. They are invariably not to be depended upon in regard to their individual results or their relations with fellow workers.

The man who is mysterious about his motives, his methods of work and his plans, is objectionable, not only because of his lack of frankness, but because he knows that his real resources and ideas are so shallow and of such little value that he must rely on vagueness and inference to "boost his game."

Lavish money spenders, the spendthrifts, are a class of those who "show off." They say, by their attitude: "Look at all my money! I guess it will convince you I'm a great fellow. I must be if I have so much to throw away!" Frequently, their families are close to want.

"Reformers" and narrow-minded men are blood cousins. The narrow-minded think along one line entirely for a certain length of time, producing the impression that they are firm and will "stay put." In fact, however, they are apt to change swiftly and follow with the same intensity another line of thought. "Wild reformers" are fundamentally changeable. Since they want to change the existing system of things in regard to religion, politics or government, they are bound to have the same attitude toward their jobs and methods of work.

Of the superstitious, Madame de Staël said the final word when she asserted that to have an unpleasant premonition is merely to confess in advance that one will be unable to meet a certain crisis if it arises.

The nonpunctual are possessed by this failing because they cannot keep their minds on their appointments and obligations. They are essentially scatterbrained. They have a contempt for the clock because they have no idea of the value of their own time or of other people's. They are inherently careless, indifferent.

Any of these objectionable qualities and their symptoms can be eradicated from a man's character and mannerisms. It is a good thing to know that they stand in the way of employment and advancement.

Examine yourself. Find out wherein the little book of the employer is against you. When you have found that out, get busy on yourself. Compel yourself to measure up to specifications.

For Country and Chillycloth

By J. Frank Davis

Author of "Chicago Bound," "The Unluckiness of Cats," Etc.

Once more the wiles of Almanzar Evarts are to the fore, in connection with his latest ladylove, Miss Clara Little, who dares admire the nice, straight hair of another colored gentleman. 'Manzar is thereupon put on his mettle

"THEN up to this awful stylish restaurant wheah they was havin' supper come a Texas-cab," Almanzar Evarts told Miss Clara Little. Cabs with hurrying clocks not yet being within the San Antonio experience, he had never heard their name spoken, and a certain slowness in reading, combined with somewhat defective vision, frequently gave him strange ideas as to unfamiliar words.

He and Miss Little were sitting upon the gallery of Miss Little's home in one of the smaller colored neighborhoods, and he was enthusiastically recounting the plot of an unsually thrilling motion picture he had witnessed the previous evening. It had escaped his observation that Miss Little was not displaying deep interest, due, perhaps, to a reasonable feeling on her part that it would have been more satisfactory to see the picture herself than to hear it described. True, he had the excuse that she had been obliged to go with her mother to prayer meeting the evening before, but she could not see that this reason for not taking her was entirely adequate; the picture ran for three nights.

"Then they got up f'om the table, an' Chahles Winsor Hamilton called foh her cloak, an' they went out an' got into the Texas-cab," he continued. "An' they hadn't more'n got into the park, wheah they wa'n't no houses anywheah eroun', then he begun askin' her again will she marry him. Well, first off she jes' kind o' set back in her corneh an' didn' pay him no 'tention, but afteh a while she ovehcome her feelin's an' let him hold her hand. Because she had a scheme to get the secret.

"So her time was kinda took up w'en the Texas-cab tuhned off f'om the way it ought to go, an' she neveh notice' he was havin' her toted to the headquartehs of the gang. But all this time, Lawrence Rich, the secret-service detective, was behine 'em. He come to the stylish restaurant jes' afteh they lef', an' w'en he found out they had gone he got a motor cycle an' stahted out right smaht to follow 'em. An' as the Texas-cab keeps goin' an' goin', he keeps comin' an' comin', neareh an' neareh behine 'em."

"Wheah did he get a motor cycle, 'Manzar?" Miss Little asked, absentmindedly.

"Why—right eroun' theah somewheahs," he replied, a trifle annoyed. "Well, Chahles Winsor Hamilton he keeps a-makin' love to Miss Pheeb Crosby, an' she don't notice foh quite a while 'at they are plumb off the right road."

Almanzar's rendition of the heroine's Christian name represented his attempt to translate into sound another unfamiliar combination of letters, he never having met or heard of any lady named Phœbe.

"But by an' by Miss Pheeb Crosby she gets sup'stitious an' she looks out o' the window an' she says——"

"Suspicious," corrected Miss Little, who occasionally emphasized her superior culture, Almanzar having passed only through grammar school while she

had been privileged to attend one year at high.

"Some says one an' some says the other," he replied, impatiently. "I usually says it sup'stitious. An' she says to Chahles Winsor Hamilton, 'Take me to my home instantly at once.' But he sort o' laffs an' keeps on a-makin' love, when, whoosh! up side o' that Texas-cab comes Lawrence Rich, the secret-service detective, on his motor cycle, an' makes the chauffeur stop, an' sticks a pistol in thoo the window right up against Chahles Winsor Hamilton.

"So he makes him get out, an' they talk about one thing an' ernother, an' Chahles Winsor Hamilton tries to pass it off, but Lawrence Rich, the secret-service detective, he says, 'You are arrested as a deserter f'om the ahmy," he says. An' Chahles Winsor Hamilton says, 'I s'pose you are afteh the rewahd they pay foh bringin' deserters back.' But he is jes' sayin' this to gain time, so he kin take a li'l' bottle out of his pocket an' drink it. Then, w'en he has done so, his face goes all—— Did you eveh see 'at pitcher call' 'Jiggle an' Hyde,' Clara?"

"Las' summer. I didn' like it. It didn' have anything funny in it er-tall."

"I don' know," Almanzar responded, judicially. "I couldn' go to say *'at*. I mos' busted laffin' w'en 'at ol' Hyde couldn' get no mo' medicine to change hisself back into Jiggle. Well, w'at I was goin' to say was 'at this Chahles Winsor Hamilton, w'en he had swallowed this bottle, his face all kinda twisted up like 'at ol' Mista' Hyde, an' his hair come down, long an' black, oveh his face, an'——"

"Did you *eveh* see nicer hair than Mista' Doxey's got?" Miss Little interrupted, dreamily. "It kin come right down in his eyes."

Almanzar was distinctly irritated. He and Clara Little had been engaged for four months, which was a record length of time for him to be engaged to any girl, and more than once, lately, he had been conscious of a growing tendency on her part toward incomplete attention and irrelevant side remarks.

He was confused, now, as well as annoyed.

"Mista' Doxey?" he repeated. "I don' guess maybe I've eveh seen him. What pitcher was he at?"

"Not any pitcher. I don't mean some actor, 'Manzar. I was thinkin' of Mista' William Doxey, down to the chuhch. Ain't you eveh notice' his hair?"

Almanzar *had* noticed Mr. Doxey's hair. Often, with feelings of envy. His own hair was far from kinky and would easily grow three inches long, and by keeping it tightly bound in a turban during most of his working hours he succeeded in getting an effect during his appearances in public that might have been described as "somewhat wavy"—if you weren't too particular about word values. But young Mr. Doxey was a very light person, whose hair was almost Caucasian in texture. Almanzar's reply was scornful:

"Huh! His hair *ought* to be straight, f'om all I heah. Know w'at he does? Irons it with a hot flatiron jes' befo' he goes to chuhch or sociables. One time, so a boy told me 'at lives up his way, 'at Bill Doxey got the flat too hot an' sco'ched his haid so he had to stay home most a week. Easy ernuff to get straight hair if you want to sco'ch you' haid!"

Much of this seemed to have passed Miss Little by. "How come it, 'Manzar," she asked, following out her own line of thought, "how come nobody eveh see 'at Mista' Doxey except at chuhch an' sociables? I don't know *w'en* I've eveh seen him anywheahs else."

"'At Bill Doxey," Almanzar replied, with the finality of an arbiter of elegance, "don' go out in society because he don' know *how*. 'At Bill Doxey, he ain' got no social standin' whateveh."

"He dresses stylish," she maintained stubbornly. "He sho had a pretty Palm Beach soot on at chuhch, las' Sunday."

This was getting unpleasant and called for a positive diversion.

"Palm Beach soots ain't as much style as they use' to be with good

dressers," Almanzar declared. "I got a nice Palm Beach, but I ain't put it on. Too early to wear Palm Beach soots, anyway, if you got any otheh good clothes. Folks don' put on Palm Beach soots in April. Up to now, I don' believe I've seen more'n three or fo' white gen'lemen wearin' Palm Beach soots." Carried away by the sound of his own voice, he added a statement born of the moment: "*I* don't 'xpec' to wear *any* Palm Beach this yeah. Chillycloth is lots mo' stylish. I'm havin' me a soot made of Chillycloth. Wear it soon's it gets wahm ernuff."

The diversion was successful; Clara came open-eyed out of her trance.

"Havin' it *made!*" she exclaimed. "My gracious, 'Manzar! I didn' know you eveh had clothes *made*. Wheah?"

"Radway & Dunne's," he boasted, naming the most aristocratic tailors in the city—a house, as every one knew, which had no provision for negro installment accounts. "They're Mista' Fahnswo'th's tailors, an' he fixes it foh me."

Her voice was most agreeably awe-stricken. "Chillycloth's mo' expensive than Palm Beach, ain't it? An' at Radway & Dunne's it must cost a terrible lot."

He answered with infinite airiness: "'At's er least o' *my* troubles. I got a li'l' money put by, an' the thing to do with money 'at's put by is to get it once in erwhile an' *spend* it, ain't it? 'At's w'at you get money put by *for*."

Clara's attention was now as concentrated as he could wish. He didn't waste a moment worrying about how he should make good on his boastfulness, and indeed it would have seemed a rather fruitless problem, seeing at the moment his financial resources totaled exactly five cents and he had already drawn all his present week's wages as cook and house boy from Mrs. Farnsworth, and a part of his next. Sufficient unto the day might be its evils; for the present he had successfully distracted Clara's mind from the contemplation of Bill Doxey and his hair.

"Oh, I know w'at let's do, 'Manzar!" cried Miss Little. "Let's go on the ride Sunday oveh to Mista' Garrison's. Theah's room foh two moah."

Almanzar's eyes rolled slightly. He had heard about the automobile trip that some of the young people were planning to take the following Sunday to the farm of a prosperous old colored couple named Garrison, some thirty miles from town. "Smoke" Aldrich, livery chauffeur, was getting it up. His boss had promised to let him have a car for nine dollars, and Smoke was going to drive it himself and take his girl. Three other couples would each pay three dollars and crowd into the tonneau—three on the big seat, two on the dinky seats and one on a camp stool. At the Garrison farm, where city folks always found an enthusiastic welcome, was to be barbecued goat. Delightful!

But three dollars!

"I don' see how I could be absent f'om the choir," he temporized.

"Oh, dear!" Clara sighed. "I thought sholy—— An' I already tuhned down one invitation to go."

"You say you *did!* Who asked you?"

"Mista' Doxey. He mention' it afteh prayer meetin', las' night, an' o' course I thought you——"

"Maybe I could get off f'om singin'," Almanzar decided. "We'll go. You tell 'em to count us in."

"'Manzar, you sho are a nice man!" she cried, rapturously. "An' Smoke Aldrich—he's been down theah twice befo', you know—he says ol' Mista' Garrison is fixin' to have a barbecue, anyway, but most always he has fried chicken, too, an' *everything*."

"Did Smoke say w'en he c'lects the fares?" Almanzar asked, a little later, trying to speak casually.

"Jes' befo' he stahts f'om heah," she said. "He *'specially* mention' at."

"Natchully," Almanzar agreed. "Natchully."

Mr. Farnsworth came home early Saturday afternoon, but Mrs. Farnsworth, detained at a war-work committee meeting, did not arrive until nearly dinner time. It was after dinner, out

on the front gallery, while the cheerful clatter of Almanzar's dishes came out faintly to them from the kitchen, that they gained their first opportunity to converse without chance of being overheard.

"I'd been in the house about half an hour to-day," he said, "and was reading in the den, when I noticed Almanzar prowling about the back yard, looking for something in the grass and ostentatiously registering deep disappointment. He kept it up so long I *had* to ask him; it would have been a shame not to. It developed he had lost half a dollar."

"Did you?" asked Mrs. Farnsworth, laughing quietly.

"Of course. A temporary loan, so stated and understood. Maybe I oughtn't to have fallen for it, but the seriousness with which he hunted for that imaginary four bits—— It seems he might have lost it out on the street, although he thought it was in the yard and that he might find it most any minute. He did good enough acting to earn it. Do you know anything about the emergency that occasioned all this?"

"All about it. I'm glad you let him have it. I've been trying, off and on, ever since noon, to think of a way of doing it without smashing a household rule.

"You didn't notice any of them, I suppose, but the things that boy did this morning—some of them before we were up—warned me perfectly as to what was coming. He had this gallery scrubbed before breakfast, and it was washed two days ago. He cleaned the kitchen and the refrigerator, and picked up the yard, and found time, before lunch, to wash Rufus, and I hadn't told him to do that. Said Rufus had been in a fight last night and got terribly dirty, which was true enough, only nobody would ever expect him to notice it.

"The explanation came, as usual, right after lunch, when I am supposed to be good-natured. Some boys and girls of his acquaintance have engaged an automobile—one of them works in a negro livery garage—and are going, to-morrow, to visit some old darkies that have a farm somewhere out toward Seguin. He wants to go—with a girl, of course. The cost is three dollars a couple."

"So he touched you for enough over what was coming to him to-night to make three dollars. Well, I thought you always let him get a little ahead."

"That's it. There wasn't anything coming to him to-night, and he had drawn all but two dollars and a half on next week, and I have always made it a rule not to let him get more than a week overdrawn. So I finally stood for an advance of two and a half—after a good deal of discussion, naturally, and a carefully worded half promise from him that he wouldn't ask for any more before Wednesday—but beyond that I wouldn't budge."

"And two and a half wouldn't do at all; he had to have three. That comes under the head of cruelty to servants."

"I'm glad he thought of that idea of losing money in the yard; it saves me doing something that might have set a bad precedent. I had about decided to go out into the kitchen, just before he finished his dishes, and tell him I wouldn't let him have any additional advance, but that I had spoken to you about it and that you had agreed to lend him fifty cents, as a personal matter. Of course I was going to fix it somehow; I couldn't let a half dollar stand between him and this outing, and you know I have been promising him a whole Sunday off ever since Aunt Carrie was here."

"Did you give him the usual fifteen cents for washing the dog?"

"No. I didn't tell him to do it. *That* might get him into the habit of washing him every day."

"I don't believe anything would do that, but, even so, we could stand it if Rufo could. Go on; give it to him. You don't want him to go on that trip with just the money to pay his share of the car and not a single cent over."

Mrs. Farnsworth hesitated. "I wonder if the car could be less than three dollars apiece," she said. "He may al-

ready have provided for a margin. It isn't likely, is it? All right. I'll do it. If he makes dog baths a habit every time he wants a little extra change, the blame will be on your head—and the change out of your pocket." She entered the house and went to the kitchen, whence, presently, she returned, followed by the sound of Almanzar's voice uplifted in song.

The automobile party, with much shouting and giggling, squeezed out of the car not long after noon in front of the Garrison farmhouse, which stood near a little clump of trees far back from the glaring country road. Old Eph Garrison and Sallie, his wife, beamed a delighted reception. All their children were married and gone, and they liked to have young people around. City young people, especially. They were justifiably proud of the quantity and quality of their hospitality.

Smoke Aldrich, with ceremony, introduced those of his companions who had never been there before. Much handshaking and excessively polite acknowledgment followed. While they were getting acquainted a young man came out of the house—a stocky youth of medium height, about Almanzar's age—twenty-three. He was the color of a new saddle and almost straight-haired, and would pass for good looking were it not for his eyes, which were sullen and furtive.

"This is my nephew, folks—Buddy Small," Garrison announced. "Mista' Aldrich, Miss Flood, Mista' Evarts ——" He went through the list, while they all greeted Mr. Small effusively. "'En now," he said hastily, when the introductions were completed, "ef you-all will excuse me, I'll go look at 'at goat. Barbecuin' er goat sho takes plenty of 'tention. I 'xpec' maybe I been away f'om 'at goat too long already."

They all wanted to see the goat immediately, and went with him. Followed, as they sniffed and exclaimed and squealed admiringly, a lecture on the one and only proper method of barbecuing goat *right*. Eph Harrison conceded that he knew; the secret had come to him from his own grandfather, who had learned it on Colonel Andrew J. Garrison's plantation, before the war, and all the world was aware—or its ignorance was abysmal—that nowhere had there ever been such artistic barbecues as those conducted under the auspices of Colonel Andrew J. Garrison.

The goat in due time arrived at the proper turn for serving, and the young people sat down to a dinner that left no room in their minds for anything else. There were also fried chicken, as Smoke had predicted, and candied yams, and stacks of rice-flour biscuits that were more appetizing than most people's wheat-flour product, and hot, strong coffee.

An hour or two later, as the lethargy induced by the feast began to pass, conversation revived. They were all seated out of doors, in the shade of the gallery.

Most naturally, the talk promptly turned on the war. One of the visitors, a boy named Charlie Green, was in the draft, away down near the bottom of the list, but liable to be called almost any time now; Almanzar himself had been in the very first call, but had been exempted because of his eyes; all the others had acquaintances among the colored boys in the new national army. Rather vague, in the minds of these young people, were the causes of the war, except that they had to do with "freedom"—word of all words with which to conjure the negro imagination—and confused was their understanding of its location, any place more than a hundred miles distant being for most of them too far outside their experience to be comprehended. But they knew, as all south Texas knew, that the claims for exemption on the part of colored selected men in that section had not averaged higher than among the white men drafted, and they were awed and nervous about it all, but proud of doing their share.

"Ef I should get mine," Charlie Green said, after a little, speaking with entire seriousness. "I don't care so much ef only they gives me a military

fun'ral. A *full* military fun'ral," he amended. "With a band, an' shootin' at the grave."

Charlie was not thinking of a funeral in France, or up North somewhere, or even so far away as some distant camp in Texas—Fort Worth or Houston, say. He was visualizing that funeral as being held from his own church in San Antonio, the A. M. E. Zion, with a procession through East Commerce Street. He thought of himself as witnessing it from somewhere, observing with a melancholy satisfaction the trappings of war, the casket on a gun carriage, the girls of the congregation crying and carrying on and remarking to each other what a brave man Charlie Green was, and his mother in the deepest mourning that ever had been worn in the A. M. E. Zion, the highly distinguished observed of all observers in a most dramatic spectacle.

"They say you always has a military fun'ral," Almanzar put in. "Not always the band, maybe, but shootin' at the grave."

Mr. Buddy Small had not participated in the war conversation; he had, in fact, shown some uneasiness as it progressed. Now he exclaimed:

"My goodness! Let's talk erbout sump'n besides wah. Seems lak eve'ybody eve'ywheah kain't talk erbout nothin' but wah, nowadays. Let's sing sump'n."

A proposition to sing seldom fails to be received sympathetically by an Afro-American audience.

"'At's a good idea," one of the girls agreed, promptly. "You staht sump'n, Mista' Evarts."

Almanzar never had to be asked twice to sing. He responded now, but with more cheerfulness than tact, considering the form of Mr. Small's suggestion. His mind, still on the war and the colored soldiers in the camp at San Antonio, hit upon a song that the black boys in uniform liked for its snappy air, and were singing pretty often, to the pain and perturbation of high-browed musical folk who couldn't understand why soldiers had rather sing ragtime than "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," and thought the government ought to take time to educate them out of such preferences.

He sang the first verse, in his pleasant tenor, and the others—except Small, who sat frankly scowling—came in more or less surely on the chorus:

We're marchin' erlong,
We're marchin' erlong,
We want the chance to go to France, to
France a millyun strong;
To battle for free
Dem-o-cra-cee,
So we're learnin' to shoot an' salute, to suit,
an' we'll soon be marchin' erlong.

Clara Little observed the displeasure in Buddy Small's face. She had been looking at him pretty frequently, since dinner. He smiled whenever he caught her eye, and his beautiful, almost straight hair fell so far down over his forehead that she could imagine it, tousled, coming down into his eyes.

"Do you sing, Mista' Small?" she asked. "Kain't you staht sump'n?"

Almanzar, who was just preparing to begin the second verse, took his turn at scowling.

"I like ol'-timey tunes, don't you?" Small said. "Ol' songs like 'Swing Low' an' 'Welcome Table,' and like 'at."

"Let's sing 'Welcome Table,'" Clara agreed, with enthusiasm. "*Ever'ybody* knows 'at, so we kin *all* sing."

As Buddy had not participated in the former song, Almanzar now for the first time learned what a fine voice he had. It was a strong, musical baritone, especially adapted to the strange minors and slurred passages of the old folksong that Southern negroes love, its every line a crude record of the heart throb of the slave who saw hope for liberty and retribution only in the heavenly hereafter:

I'm goin' ter sit down at the Welcome Table
Some o' these days;
I'm goin' ter feast on milk an' honey,
Some o' these days;
Hallelujah!

They all took part, even Eph Garrison and Sallie, and the strange, barbaric harmonies of the "Hallelujah!" which, as the negroes sing them, have

proven the despair of many a musician striving to represent them by written notes, resounded across the prairie.

The song ran on, verse after verse, to the triumphant:

I'm goin' ter tell God how you treat me
Some o' these days.

Buddy Small's voice, which was carrying the solo line in each verse, quavered, slowed up, stopped. They all looked at him and from his straining eyes to a cloud of dust in the road, far off toward the west. The singing ceased and they all heard the insistent popping of a motor.

"Now who you 'xpec' 'at might be?" their host demanded. "Them things don' eveh come down thisyer road, less'n they los' theih way."

They could see, now, that it was a motor cycle driven by a white man. The guests noticed only vaguely, as the rider swung from the road toward the house, that Buddy Small rose silently and faded swiftly through the doorway behind him.

He passed straight through the house and out by the back door. A shed, only a few yards distant, had against its hither side an uneven, tumble-down trellis, now luxuriantly covered with honeysuckle. Probably he had long since noted the thickness of the vine, which would completely conceal one who hid behind it, provided only he kept his feet off the ground, because he did not hesitate.

He slid behind the honeysuckle, put a foot on the lowest bar of the trellis and gripped an upper crosspiece to lift himself. A scorpion, dozing on that upper crosspiece just beside the spot where Buddy's hand fell, awoke and protested after the manner of his kind. Those in front of the house heard an agonized yelp, a thud as feet came down on the ground, a scramble as they went up again, and stifled, quickly repressed imprecations.

The white man on the motor cycle brought it to a stop at the gallery.

"Howdy, Eph," he remarked, with businesslike directness. "Evenin', A'nty." He appraised the gathered guests with a calculating eye. "Any of these boys your nephew Cash?"

"My nephew Cash?" Garrison repeated. "What you mean, Cash, Mista' Freeman?"

"Cash Small. You've got a nephew named Cassius Thomas Small, haven't you? Ain't he here?"

"Lawsy, no!" the old man replied without a moment's hesitation. "Cash? W'y, 'at boy he went intoe the ahmy, Mista' Freeman. En' he nevah live heah, anyway; he live' oveh in eas' Texas—an' he was up in Arkansaw w'en he got drafted. They done send him intoe a camp somewheres up theah in Arkansaw. How come you thought he might be heah?"

The caller looked sharply into Garrison's face, which expressed interested curiosity and nothing more. "I guess you didn't hear, then, that he ain't up in that camp no more," he said. "He deserted. There's a notice out for him."

"Lawsy, Lawsy!" the old man exclaimed. "You say he tuhn hisself loose f'om 'at camp? Wheah did he go, Mista' Freeman?"

"That's what Uncle Sam wants to find out. Ain't there been a young nigger staying with you this last two three days? I heard so over to town."

"Yassuh," Garrison replied, promptly. "Yassuh. My sisteh's boy Buddy, he was heah. Yassuh. He's brotheh toe 'at triflin', no-'count Cash. Youngeh brotheh. Yassuh, he was heah."

"Where is he?"

"I reckon maybe he's at Houston by toe-day. 'At's wheah he was fixin' toe go w'en he lef'. He had er job at Houston."

The white man looked over the visitors. "Any of you know anything about this here Cash Small?" he suddenly demanded, accusingly.

"Nossuh." They said it almost in chorus. One of the boys added: "I nev' heard of him befo', suh. We folks is all f'om San 'Ntonio."

Eph Harrison, whose relations with Deputy Sheriff Freeman always had been pleasant, asked a question:

"How come Cash done quit the ahmy,

Mista' Freeman? Did he get intoe some trouble up that-a-way?"

"No trouble that I've heard except that he was a yellow coward," the white man said, shortly. "When they get him he'll work for the government quite some time—and it won't be carrying a gun, either. If he comes here you let me know; you hear *me*, Eph!"

"Sholy," the old man assented. "Sholy. Now jes' think of 'at triflin' Cash Small goin' an' quittin' the ahmy w'en——"

The officer was already preparing to start his machine.

"They knew he had an uncle down this-a-way," he said, "so they let me know, and when I heard you had a strange young nigger visitin' with you I thought I'd——" He straightened up. "I'm going to look the place over anyway."

"Come right in, suh," Eph cried. "Go right in the house an' look eroun'. Lawsy! Runnin' away f'om the ahmy an' gettin' notices sent out toe sheriffs, an'——"

Mr. Freeman went into the house and visited each room, then stood in the back doorway and thoughtfully surveyed the scenery. The shed alone seemed to possess possibilities of concealment; he entered it and peered back of and under the agricultural implements that cluttered it. He came back, then, to his motor cycle.

"If he comes here, send me word," he again warned. "Don't you go to hidin' him out, Eph!"

"Yassuh. I sho will. Yassuh. But I don' guess he'll eveh come heah, Mista' Freeman. He'll be mo' likely to go somewheahs in eas' Texas, wheah he lives."

"Sounds probable," Freeman said, and again made ready to depart. "Well, g'-by, Eph. Evenin', A'nt Sallie." He nodded comprehensively to the others. His motor cycle went sputtering back up the road.

Its dust was dissipating on the far horizon before any one spoke except Garrison, and he broke the silence but once—with a significant glance toward his wife which nobody but Almanzar happened to observe. Then he only said: "Jes' imagine Mista' Freeman gettin' Cash an' Buddy all mix' up like 'at!"

From inside the house came a wailing, earnest plaint:

"A'nt Sallie! Oh, A'nt Sallie! Wheah's sump'n to put on a sting? I done put my hand on a ol' stingin' scorpion, an' he sholy druv his tail into me good! Kain't you come a-runnin', a'nty?"

Their hostess hastened to respond to the appeal. At the same time Eph Garrison raised his voice and shouted through the door:

"'At man, Buddy, was Mista' Freeman, er dep'ty sheriff. He was lookin' foh yo' brother Cash. Cash done lef' the ahmy."

"My brother Cash!" The exclamation contained a note of astonishment and a strange emphasis on the second word. Aunt Sallie's murmuring voice cut in on it, and Buddy said nothing further, at least not distinctly enough to be heard by the visitors. He came to the door presently, his features still screwed up with the pain of the insect sting.

"Know who I thought 'at w'ite man was?" he remarked, conversationally, as he found a chair. "I thought he was er w'ite man I had a ruckus with one day up in San 'Ntonio. 'At w'ite man, he used to ride one o' them motor cycles. Said, 'at day I had trouble with him, he'd get me some time an' get me good. W'en I saw him comin', I sholy thought it was him."

Nobody questioned this plausible explanation. They went back to talking and singing. It was nearly an hour before the effect of the scorpion's protest wore off sufficiently for Buddy Small to feel like participating in the music, but before it was time to go he obliged several times. All his contributions were of the old-fashioned sort. The war was not again discussed.

Old Eph Garrison had clearly sensed the sincerity of Almanzar's earlier comments on the draft, and when, as the party was getting ready to leave, he found himself beside the boy with no-

body in hearing, he spoke, abruptly, thoughts that must have been surging for outlet:

"My daddy he was body servant toe ol' Cunnel Garrison, w'en he was er young man. Him an' ol' cunnel see a right smaht o' fightin'. But he didn' run away, my daddy didn'. Nossuh. 'Pears toe me lak boys ain't ez good nowadays, some of 'em, ez they use' toe be. You know, Mista' Evarts, I don't lak to have my folks runnin' away w'en all the other cullud boys is stayin'."

Almanzar, surprised at this sudden confidence, could answer only with a sympathetic silence. The old man broke out, with surprising heat:

"Wouldn't caih ef the gov'ment *did* get him, en' put him in the pen' en' keep him the rest of his natchull-bawn, triflin' life! Disgracin' all his kin thata-way! Serve him right!" He signed. "But you kain't go toe tellin' things toe w'ite folks. Ain't nothin' *eveh* toe be gain' by 'at."

"Theah certain'y ain't," Almanzar agreed.

Dusk was falling, and the eight young people were well on the road back to San Antonio, when one of them cried:

"Let's sing! Some o' that lively music. You staht it, 'Manzar."

All the afternoon the second verse of that camp ditty which Buddy Small would not let him finish had been lurking, unexpressed, in Almanzar's system. He waited for no urging to begin it.

"Oh, *don't*, 'Manzar!" Clara Little cried, petulantly. "*Don't* let's sing any o' those ol' wah pieces. Don't you love ol'-timey songs? Let's have 'Welcome Table.' But it won't soun' the same without Mista' Small heah to lead. Ain't he jes' the *lovely* singeh?"

Somebody else started "The Welcome Table." Almanzar neither sang nor spoke, unless directly addressed, the remainder of the way home.

After his first sulkiness wore off, he did not think as much about Clara and how angry she had made him, as at first. His mind mostly was on Cassius Small, deserter. Cassius Small, who had disgraced his family and colored folks generally. Cassius Small, who had a saddle-colored skin and almost straight hair, and who did not hesitate to interrupt singers and substitute other music for theirs.

Back of all this was a real, if inarticulate, sense of patriotic resentment. It was true that when Almanzar was drafted he had been depressed, and when he found he was going to be exempted he was elated. But that was because he was *afraid*. He hadn't for an instant considered claiming exemption, or running away from the draft, or shirking in any way whatever. Scared as he was, he would have gone on if the doctors hadn't refused him because of his eyes. That he had learned from a friendly physician of his disability before the official examination and concealed the knowledge while he basked in some very agreeable hero worship, was merely an incident.

He had a profound contempt for all deserters, white or black. If he could only—— His mind touched fleetingly on whether it would be an improper return for old Eph Garrison's hospitality, and instantly dismissed the thought; he knew the old man himself would be glad to see it happen.

But one doesn't tell colored people's business to Caucasians. One went, Almanzar supposed, up to the army camp and interviewed a white colonel, or general, or something. Or perhaps it might be done at the police station. Both equally impossible!

Inspiration came to him when they had passed the close-lying suburbs of the city and were nearly home.

His mind had drifted to the time when he went before the doctors for his own physical examination. His girl of the moment had encouraged him to hope for acceptance; she was Miss Millie Estabrooks, now three or four fiancées removed. Millie was warmly and intensely patriotic and proud of her family record. Her grandfather had fought with a Union colored regiment; her grandmother still lived on a pension; her favorite uncle had been in the regular army nearly twenty years——

There flashed into Almanzar's mind

the picture of Millie's uncle, Top Sergeant A. Lincoln Estabrooks, a grave, erect, authoritative man of forty-odd, whom he had met several times at Millie's house. Unless he had been sent away very recently, Almanzar knew that Sergeant Estabrooks was still at Camp Travis, molding colored draft recruits into soldiers.

He said his good nights in the shortest possible form, and set out for the camp. Fortunately he had fifteen cents, which gave him the necessary car fare with a nickel to spare. He couldn't think of anything he might need the extra nickel for, so, while he waited at a transfer point for his army-post car, he slipped into a colored drug store and spent it for a glass of soda.

It wasn't easy at that hour to reach Sergeant Estabrooks, but Almanzar accomplished it. He stuttered and blundered his opening words, while Estabrooks surveyed him with eyes that were used to seeing what colored boys were trying to get at, because the brain behind them understood colored boys thoroughly.

"What I want to know is a li'l' info'mation," he said. "About if a fello' knew—or maybe if he jes' thought he knew—wheah theah was a man 'at had run away f'om the ahmy——"

"Who is it?"

The sergeant hurled the question at him so sharply that he answered before he thought: "Name's Cash Small. He quit some camp up in Arkansaw. But, listen, Mista' Estab'ooks. I'm jes' tellin' *you*, you know."

"I know. Where is he?"

This time Almanzar hesitated. He decided there was nothing to do except frankly submit his problem in racial ethics to the soldier.

"But, looky heah, Mista' Estab'ooks. 'Tain't fitten to go tellin' cullud folks' business to white folks. Kain't go to git after a thing like this without doin' 'at, kin you?"

"Some cullud folks' business white folks *ought* to know," the sergeant declared, positively. "But you don't need to, Evarts. You kin jes' tell me, an' I'll natchully 'tend to the rest."

"But I don' even know if it's him," Almanzar protested. "Is they any way you kin find out w'at kind o' lookin' man a fello' name' Cash Small—Cassius Thomas Small—is, 'at run away f'om 'at camp I mention?"

"I reckon likely. Come up up to the cap'n an' we'll——"

"Nossuh!" Almanzar sprang back and almost took to his heels. "Ain' goin' to see *no* white man er-*tall*."

Estabrooks sized him up shrewdly. "But you'll stay here until I come back, won't you?" Almanzar agreed.

The sergeant's words, upon his return, were terse and to the point:

"Age twenty-three, height five foot seven, weight a hundred an' sixty-three, very light-colored, straight hair——"

"'At's him," Almanzar broke in, eagerly. "It sholy is. Well, suh—— If I was sho it was right to——"

"What makes some white folks say all niggehs is wuthless?" demanded Sergeant Estabrooks, sharply. "You an' me know they ain't. You an' me know good white folks an' we know good cullud folks. But if a cullud man—citizen of the United States—cullud man that has a vote an' can live where he please' an' work foh whoever he please' an' leave his job when he please' instead of bein' a slave, like he used to be—if 'at cullud man don't help the American flag when it needs to be help', how you goin' to blame those white folks if they say he's no good?"

"That's sholy right, Mista' Estab'ooks, yassuh!" Almanzar agreed, emotionally swept off his feet. "Well, it's this-a-way——"

The sergeant listened without interruptions. "Will you go with me to get him?" he demanded, when the story was finished. "The cap'n is likely to send me."

"Nossuh. Please. I'd rather not. I got t' get home. Mista' Fahnswo'th don' 'xpec' me to stay out ve'y late. But I kin tell you ezzackly how to get theah." He described the route in detail. "How you goin'?" he asked.

"With another man, in a side car, prob'ly," the sergeant replied. He was

already moving toward the captain's quarters.

"Then you betteh stop it a mile er so this side an' walk. 'At poppin' of them engines is sho alarmin'. An' if you don' find him in the house or eroun', look behine the honeysuckle on the side of 'at shed. But don't paw eroun' in it; it's got stingin' scorpions."

He remembered the suggestion of a reward in the moving-picture story.

A reward! He hadn't thought of that. Well, although it was not for any reward he had done it, if there was something coming to somebody—he thought it might be as much as five dollars—he couldn't see any reason why the matter should be overlooked.

"Mista' Estab'ooks!" he called, and ran after him. "Jes' a minute. Somebody tol' me, once, theah was a rewahd if a fello' gets a man 'at run away f'om the ahmy."

"There is if the deserter is delivered to the neares' ahmy camp," Estabrooks said. "I reckon, if you wanted to go with me an' point this man out, maybe you'd get it."

Almanzar sighed. "Thanky, suh," he said. "Well, I'll be goin' erlong home."

A slight smile flitted across the soldier's face. "I'll speak to the cap'n about it, anyway," he said. "Maybe, seein' as we hadn't heard a thing about him an' we make the arrest without any other civilian help, maybe he can fix it foh you to get something."

"Thanky kindly," Almanzar acknowledged. "Well, good night, suh."

A second lieutenant and Sergeant Estabrooks came to Mr. Farnsworth's office one afternoon and gave him information that caused him to telephone his wife to have Almanzar change his clothes and come downtown as fast as the first street car could bring him.

Almanzar came, fell over a chair, dropped his hat, listened with bulging eyes, and finally stared unbelieving at the incredible stack of bank notes—fifty dollars—that the white man in uniform placed on Mr. Farnsworth's desk. In a daze, he signed his name to the receipt the officer produced. The white man and Sergeant Estabrooks went away.

"Almanzar." Mr. Farnsworth's voice was kindly but firm. "What are you going to do with all that money?"

The boy replied without a second's hesitation:

"Get me a Chillycloth soot. An' two new shirts—*three* new shirts. An' a paih o' shoes."

"You don't need a single one of those things. You've got a nice Palm Beach from last year."

"Palm Beaches ain't as stylish as Chillycloth this yeah, so I heard, Mista' Fahnswo'th."

"That's nonsense. They cost more than Palm Beaches, but they aren't any cooler, and that's what you wear thin clothes for. *I'm* not going to buy any Chillycloth suits, Almanzar, nor any Palm Beaches, either. I'm going to get along this summer with my last year's clothes."

"Well, you don' have to, suh. You ain't a young fello' an' you don' have to dress jes' so; eve'ybody *knows* you kin afford to buy new clothes if you want 'em. With me, Mista' Fahnswo'th, it's diffe'ent."

His employer turned abruptly and searched in a filing case until he was sure he had control of his features.

"But there's something else," he said, seriously. "People aren't buying clothes this year like they did before the war." He hesitated, trying to put it so the servant could comprehend. "Money that is put into clothes can't go to fight the war. The thing to do with money, these days, is save it and put it into Liberty Bonds and saving stamps. See here, Almanzar. Did you ever save any money?"

"Yassuh. Once Mamma kept it foh me ontwell it got to be sixteen dollahs an' eighty-five cents."

"And then you spent it."

"Yassuh." Almanzar's voice showed a trace of surprise at the absurdity of the question.

"Well, I'm going to ask you—— No, I won't put it that way; this is your money and of course you have a right to do anything you please with it—

anything whatever. I'm going to *suggest* to you. You could buy a Liberty Bond with this fifty dollars, Almanzar, and you would always have it. Every six months you would get interest on it, just as if you had your money in a savings bank, and if you got sick, or wanted to help your people, or anything, the bond would be worth the fifty."

"Yassuh," Almanzar agreed, blankly.

"And it's the patriotic thing to do," Mr. Farnsworth urged. "These days everybody ought to take all the money he can save and buy Liberty Bonds. Colored people ought to be patriotic as white people. Don't you think so?"

"If we ain't," Almanzar replied, glibly, to Mr. Farnsworth's surprise, "us cullud folks kain't blame some white folks if they says we all is wuthless, kin we? How do I fix to get this —er—Libbuty Bon'?"

"Go right over to the bank—the Stockmen's National—and see Colonel Mellish, the first vice president. I'd go over with you, but I've got some gentlemen waiting to see me in the outer office this minute. But you tell him you work for me, and that I sent you and asked him to fix you up, and that you want to buy a fifty-dollar bond."

He passed the money to Almanzar, who stuffed it into the deepest recess of a pocket. The boy did not look as elated as he had a few moments before; Mr. Farnsworth was almost sorry for him. "Don't waste any time getting there," he added, having in mind the temptation that would shout from store windows if Almanzar were to delay. "You can just about make it before the bank closes."

He went home at his usual hour and Mrs. Farnsworth met him at the door.

His wife straightened her face with difficulty. "I'm dying to tell you," she said, "but it wouldn't be fair. It would cheat you out of something to remember; you wouldn't get it half so well from me as you will from him. Call Almanzar into the dining room, Fred, and ask him to tell you about his Liberty Bond. And, Fred. Don't ask him about it just that way. Ask him what he bought with his fifty dollars."

Mr. Farnsworth opened the door that led from the dining room to the butler's pantry and called the servant. Almanzar's singing stopped, and he came hurrying, his face wreathed in unmanageable grins.

"Well, what about the fifty?" Mr. Farnsworth asked. "How did you come out?"

"Fine, Mista' Fahnswo'th; jes' puffec'ly fine," he declared. "I done got 'at Libbuty Bon', jes' like you told me, suh—an' a soot of Chillycloth clothes, an' a paih o' shoes, an' three shirts, *an'* three collahs an' a necktie."

"Didn't you go right to the bank, like I told you?"

"Yassuh. I done went right away. An' I see 'at ol' gen'leman, Cunnel Mellish, an' I told him I wukked foh you an' 'at you sent me oveh to buy er Libbuty Bon'. An' he asks me, 'How do you want to make the payments?' an' I asks him, 'W'at prices of payments is they?' So he tells me 'at f'om a cullud boy like me, 'at wuks foh Mista' Fred Fahnswo'th, he would take five dollahs down an' er dollah a week. He said 'at wasn't ezzackly 'cordin' to the rule, but the bank would carry it—I *think* he said 'carry it'—foh any boy 'at was sent him by Mista' Fred Fahnswo'th. I don' guess you'd eveh heard erbout 'at way of buyin' 'em foh cullud folks, had you, suh? So I give him five dollahs, an' he had me write my name on a papah, an' 'en he says Mista' Fred Fahnswo'th was a fine, pat'iotic man an' he knew his house boy would be er good, pat'iotic boy—an' 'en he gave me two bits, suh, foh myself. 'At Cunnel Mellish certain'y spoke mighty highly of you, suh."

"I see," he said, chokingly. "Very good of him," and went and looked for a long minute out of a window. When he turned there were queer drawn lines at the sides of his mouth.

"Then you got the clothes, too?"

"At Radway & Dunne's," grinned Almanzar, ecstatically. "I reminded 'em 'at I wukked foh you, an' paid 'em in advance, an' they done took my measures, an' they're goin' to *make* 'em."

The Sky Rider

By B. M. Bower

Author of "The Happy Family," "Chip of the Flying U," Etc.

(A Four-Part Story—Part Four)

CHAPTER XIX.

"WE FLY SOUTH."

JOHNNY did a great deal of thinking along the line suggested by old Sudden. At first, he thought merely how groundless was any suspicion that the air plane was in any way connected with the horse stealing, except that it might justly be accused of contributing to Johnny's negligence. Even so, Johnny could not see how one man could possibly protect the whole of Sinkhole range from thieves. He could have been on his guard, could have noticed when the first horses were missing, and notified Sudden at once. That, of course, was what had been expected of him.

Tomaso had seen the letterhead of that correspondence school, and had just accidentally mentioned it. Or was it accidental? To make sure, Johnny got out the circular which Tomaso had seen, laid it where he remembered it to have been that day, and sat down at the table where Tomaso had been sitting. He placed the lamp where the light fell full upon the paper, and studied the letterhead for several minutes, scowling.

Tomaso, he decided, had remarkably sharp eyes. Seen from that angle, the letterhead was not conspicuous. The volplaning machine was not at all striking to the eye. Unless a person knew beforehand what it represented, or was looking for something of the sort, Johnny was forced to admit that he would be likely to pass it over without a second glance. Tomaso, then, must have come there with the intention of leading adroitly to the subject of air planes. He must have brought those little, steel pliers purposely. And after all, he really had no business on the Rolling R range, if he was riding for the Forty-seven. He had come a good five miles inside the line. And when you looked at it that way, how had he got inside the line? There was no gate on the east side of the fence.

"Well! If that's why they did it—it sure worked like a charm," he summed up his cogitations disgustedly. "I'll say I swallowed the bait whole!" And he added grimly: "I wish I knew who put them wise."

Half an hour before dawn, Johnny went stumbling along the ledge to the cleft. On his broad shoulder was balanced the propeller. On his face was a look of fixed determination. He scared Bland Halliday out of a sleep in which his dreams were all of a certain cabaret in Los Angeles—dreams which made Bland's waking all the more disagreeable. Johnny tilted the propeller carefully against the rock wall, lighted a match, and cupped the blaze in his palms so that the light shone on Bland.

"Where's the lantern? You better get up—it's most daylight."

He lighted the lantern, and Bland lay blinking at it lugubriously. "And me—I dreamed I was in to Lemare's just after a big exhibition flight, and a bunch of movie queens was givin' me the glad eye."

"Yes—I've done some dreaming myself," Johnny interposed dryly. "I'm awake now. Listen here, Bland. I've been playing square with you, all along. Now listen. I meant, and if possible I still mean, to keep my promise and take you to the coast in the plane. But

something's come up that is going to hold up the trip for a few days——"

"Aw, yes! I had a hunch you'd ——"

"Shut up! I told you I'd go as soon as I could without leaving the boss in the hole. Well, it happens that—well, some horses were stolen off this range, and I'm the one that's responsible. I've got to get 'em back, or get a line on who did it—I can't go off without doing something about it. This range was in my charge. I was supposed to report anything that looked suspicious, and I—— Well, the point is this——"

"So you said," Bland cut in, with something of his natural venom.

"Shut up. There's just a chance I can find out where those horses were taken. We'll go in the plane. You'll have to go along to handle it, because I'm liable to be busy, if I run across anybody. I'm going to pack a rifle and a six-shooter, and I don't want my hands full of controls right at the critical minute. Besides," he added ingenuously, "some of these darned air currents nearly got the best of me yesterday, coming back. You can handle the machine, and I'll do the look-see."

"Aw, sa-ay! I——"

"Well, the point is this: I don't want to take any mean advantage of you. I can't afford to pay you what your services are really worth, as pilot—and there's no reason why I should. But —well, I ain't quite broke yet. I'll give you twenty-five dollars for helping me out, in case what I want to do only takes a day or two days. If it takes more, I'll give you ten dollars a day. It isn't much, but it helps when you're broke."

Bland permitted the sour droop of his lips to ease into a grin. "Now you're coming somewhere near the point, bo," he said. "But ten dollars —say! Ten dollars ain't street-car fare. Not in little old L. A. Make it twenty, bo, and you're on."

"I'll make it nothing if ten dollars a day don't suit you!" Johnny declared hotly. "Why, damn your dirty hide, that's as much as I make in a *week!* And listen. I expect to sit in the back seat—and I'll have two guns on me."

"Aw, that's right! You've got the upper hand, and so you can go ahead and abuse me like a dog—and I ain't got any come-back. It was Bland this and that, when you wanted the plane repaired. Now you've got it, and it's git-ta-hell and git busy. Pull a gun on me, beat me up—accuse me of things I never done—drag me outa bed before daylight——" His self-pitying whine droned on monotonously, but he nevertheless got into his clothes and pottered around the plane by the light of the lantern and the flaring fire Johnny started.

The one praiseworthy thing he could do he did conscientiously. He inspected carefully the control wires, went over the motor and filled the radiator and the gas tank, and made sure that he had plenty of oil. His grumbling did not in the least impair his efficiency. He replaced the propeller, cursing under his breath because Johnny had taken it off. He was up in the forward seat testing the control when Johnny called him to come and eat.

In the narrow strip of sky that showed over the niche the stars were paling. A faint flush tinged the blue as Johnny looked up anxiously.

"We'll take a little grub and my two canteens full of water," he said with a shade of uneasiness in his voice. "We don't want to get caught like those poor devils did that lost the plane. But of course——"

"Say, where you going, f'r cat's sake?" Bland looked over his cup in alarm. "Not down where them——"

"We're going to find out where those horses went. You needn't be scared, Bland. I ain't organizing any suicide club. You tend to the flying part, and I'll tend to my end of the deal. Air line, it ain't so far. We ought to make there and back easy."

He was anxious about the gas and oil, and about water, but he did not say anything about his anxiety. He made sure that the tank would not hold another pint of gas, and he was careful not to forget the canteens. Then, when he had taken every precaution possible for their welfare, he climbed into his place and told Bland to start the motor.

He was taking precautions with Bland, also.

"We fly south," he yelled, when Bland climbed into the front seat. "Make it southeast for ten miles or so—and then swing south. I'll tap you on the shoulder when I want you to turn. Whichever shoulder I tap, turn that way. Middle of your back, go straight ahead—two taps will mean fly low—three taps, land. You got that?"

Bland, pulling down his cap and adjusting his goggles, nodded. He drew on his gloves and slid down into the seat—alert, efficient, the Bland Halliday which the general public knew and admired without a thought for his personal traits.

"About how high?" he leaned back to ask. "High enough so the hum won't be noticed on the ground? Or do you want to fly lower?"

"Top of your head means high, and on the neck, low," Johnny promptly finished his code. And having thus made a keyboard of Bland's person, he settled himself with his guns beside him.

Bland eased on the power, glancing unconsciously to the right and left ailerons, as he always did when he started.

The buzz of the motor grew louder and louder, the big plane quivered, started down the sandy strip toward the reddening east, skimmed lighter and lighter the ground, rose straight and true and went whirring away into the barbaric splendor of the dawn.

CHAPTER XX.

MARY V. MAKES HIM LISTEN.

Into that same dawnlight filed the riders of the Rolling R, driving before them a small remuda. Behind them clucked the loaded chuck wagon, the leather-faced cook braced upon the front seat, his booted feet far spread upon the scarred dashboard, his arms swaying stiffly to the four-horse team. Behind him still came the hoodlum wagon with its water barrels joggling sloppily behind the seat. Little Curley drove that, and little Curley's face was sober. It had been whispered in the bunk house that Sky Rider was deep in disgrace, and Curley was worried.

On the porch of the bungalow Sudden stood with his morning cigar unlighted in his fingers, watching the little cavalcade swing past to the gate. He waved his cigar beckoningly to Bill Hayden, turned his head to shake it at something Mary V. had said from the doorway, and waited for Bill to ride close.

Mary V., camouflaged in her blue negligee worn over her riding clothes, came out and stood insistently, her two hands clasped around Sudden's unwilling arm.

"No, sir, dad, I'm not going back to bed. I'm going to say every little thing I want to say, and you and Bill have both got to listen. Get off that horse, Bill. He makes me nervous, dancing around like that. Heaven knows I'm just about raving distracted, as it is. Dad, give Bill that cigar so he won't look quite so disagreeable."

Bill looked inquiringly at Sudden. It did not seem to him that even so spoiled an offspring as Mary V. should be permitted to delay him now, when minutes counted for a good deal. He wished briefly that Mary V. belonged to him; Bill mistakenly believed that he would know how to handle her. Still, he took the cigar which Sudden obediently surrendered, and he got down off his horse and stood with one spurred foot lifted to the second step of the porch while he felt in his pocket for a match.

"Well, now, Bill's in a hurry, Mary V. We haven't got time——"

"You'd better take time, then! What's the use of Bill going off to Sinkhole unless he listens to me first? Do you think, for gracious sake, I've been riding around all over the country with my eyes shut? Or do I look nearsighted, or what? Why, my goodness! What do you suppose I laid awake all night for, piecing things that I know together, if you're going to not pay attention? Do you think, for gracious sake——"

"There, now, we don't want to get

all excited, Mary V. Sit down here and stop for-gracious-saking, and tell dad and Bill what it is you've seen. If it's anything that'll help run down those horse thieves, you'll get that Norman car, kitten, if I have to pawn my watch." Sudden gave Bill a lightened look of hope, and pulled Mary V. down beside him on the striped porch swing. Then he snorted at something he saw. "What's the riding breeches and boots for? Didn't I tell you——"

"Well, Bill's going to lend me Jake, and I'll be in a hurry——"

"Like h——" Bill began explosively, and stopped himself in time.

"Just like that," Mary V. told him calmly. "Dad, if Bill doesn't let me ride Jake, I don't believe I can remember some things I saw down on Sinkhole range—through the field glasses, from Snake Ridge. I shall feel so badly I'll just have to go into my room and lock the door and cry—all—day long!" To prove it, Mary V.'s lips began to quiver and droop at the corners. And to prepare for the deluge, Mary V. got out her handkerchief.

Bill looked unhappy. "That horse ain't safe for yuh to ride," he temporized. "He's liable to run away and kill yuh. He——"

"I've ridden him twice, and he didn't," Mary V. stopped quivering her lips long enough to retort. "I don't see why people want to be so mean to me, when I am trying my best to help about those horse thieves, and when I know things no other person on this ranch suspects, and if they did, they would simply be stunned at knowing there is a thief on their own pay roll. And when I just want Jake so I can hel-lp—and Tango is getting so lazy I simply *can't* get anywhere with him in a m-onth——" Mary V. did it. She actually was crying real tears, that slipped down her cheeks and made little dark spots on her blue kimono.

Bill Hayden looked at Sudden with harassed eyes. Sudden looked at Bill, and smoothed Mary V.'s hair—figuratively speaking; in reality he drew his fingers over a silk-and-lace cap.

"H—well, it's up to your dad. You can ride Jake if he's willin' to take the chance of you getting your neck broke. I shore won't be responsible." Bill looked more unhappy than ever, not at all as though he gloried in his martyrdom to the Rolling R.

"Why, Jake's as gentle as a ki-kitten!" Mary V. sobbed.

"Like hell, he's gentle!" muttered Bill, so far under his breath that he did not feel called upon to apologize.

"Well, now, we'll talk about Jake later on. Tell dad and Bill what it was you saw, and what you mean by a thief on the pay roll. I don't promise I'll be simply stunned with surprise—that story young Jewel told last night does seem to have some awful weak points in it——"

"Why dad *Selmer!* You know perfectly well that Johnny Jewel is the soul of honor! Why, you owe an *apology* to Johnny for ever *thinking* such a thing about him! Why, for gracious sake, must everybody on this ranch be so blind and stupid?" Mary V. asked the glorious sunrise that question, and straightway hid her face behind her handkerchief.

"Well, now, we're wasting time. I apologize to the soul of honor, and you may ride Jake—when Bill or I are with you to see how he behaves. Now, tell us what you know. This is a serious matter, Mary V. Far too serious——"

"I should think *I* am the person who knows how serious it is," Mary V. came from behind her handkerchief to remind him.

"Just who or what did you see, through your field glasses, when you looked from the top of Snake Ridge?" Sudden wisely chose to waive any irrelevant arguments.

"Why," said Mary V., "I first saw one of your men dodging along down a draw, to a place where there were some cottonwood trees. I saw him get off his horse and wait there for a few minutes, and then I saw another man riding along the gully from the other direction. And so I saw them meet, and talk a few minutes, and ride back. And

—your man was in a great hurry, and the other man was a Mexican."

"H-m-m. And who was my——"

"And so I thought I'd ride a little farther, and see what they were waving their hands toward the south for. And so I did. And it was very hot," said Mary V. pensively, "and I was so tired that when I found I was close to Sinkhole camp I went on and rested there. And before I left, that same Mexican came to the cabin, and Johnny didn't know him at all, because the Mexican said right away, 'I am the brother of Tomaso,' which of course was to introduce himself. And then he saw me, and he said he had come to borrow some matches, and Johnny gave him some, and he beat it. And after I left, I had gone perhaps a mile, when I happened to look back, and the same Mexican was riding in a hurry to the cabin. So of course he had waited until I left. And that was the man," she finished with some attention to the dramatic effect, "who told Johnny he would take him to where the air plane was sitting like a hawk—a broken-winged hawk—on the burning sands of Mexico."

"Jerusalem!" Sudden paid tribute to the tale. But Bill said a shorter word. "And which one of my——"

"And it was right after that," Mary V. went on calmly, "that you found your man at Sinkhole talking with a very bad cold. The second night, I—I was curious. And so after you had called him up, I called him. I had to wait a few minutes, as though he had to come into the house to answer. And *I* knew perfectly well that it was not Johnny speaking. I—tested him to make sure. I spoke of things that were perfectly ridiculous, and he was afraid to seem not to understand. I said I was Venus speaking, and so he called me Miss Venus. And it was *not* that Mexican," she added quickly, seeing the guess in her dad's face. "He was a white man—an American. I can almost recognize the voice, in spite of his pretended cold. I jarred him away from that once or twice. He said, 'Uh course I knowed yer voice'—and no Mexican would say that.

"So then I was very curious. I—I knew Johnny would never permit things to be said that were said. So it was a beautiful moonlight evening, and I wanted—I shall be expected to describe our Arizona plains by moonlight. So I decided that I would solve a mystery and collect my material that evening, and I—went riding."

"The deuce you——"

"So I had quite a distance to go, and I did not want to worry any one by being gone long. So I—er—didn't like to wake Bill up——"

"Hunh!" from Bill, this time.

"I really intended to take Tango as usual," Mary V. explained with dignity. "I had no thought of intruding on a person's piggishness with their old race horse, but Jake came right up and put his nose in the feed pan, and—and acted so—sort of eager—and I knew he just suffers for exercise, standing in that old corral, so it was very wrong, but I yielded to him. I rode him down to Sinkhole, and I found him a perfectly gentle lady's horse! So there now, Mr. Bill. You just——"

"And what did you find at Sinkhole?" Sudden led her firmly back to the subject.

"I found that the beans were sour, and the bread was hard as a rock, and there wasn't one thing to show that a meal had been cooked in that camp for two days, at least. And Johnny's bedding was gone—or some of it, anyway. And so was Sandy. So I came back, and changed horses and took Tango. I knew of course how stingy a person can be about a horse. And as I was riding away, behind that line of rocks so Mr. Stingy wouldn't see me, I saw a certain person come sneaking up to the corral and turn his horse inside. It was just barely daylight then, but it was the same person I saw meet the Mexican.

"And I hurried back to Snake Ridge, so I got there quite early in the morning. And I saw two men ride off toward the eastern line of Sinkhole range, and they were not Johnny Jewel

at all, which would be perfectly impossible. Because soon afterward I saw something very queer being hauled by mules, and that was Johnny bringing home his air plane, perfectly innocent.

"Who's the fellow——" Sudden and Bill spoke together, the question which harried the minds of both.

"Of course," said Mary V, "I understand that some one from the ranch would have to put them up to distracting Johnny's attention by letting him have that air plane. I can see that they would want to keep him busy so he wouldn't pay so much attention to the horses down there, and would not notice a few horses gone now and then. They could pick out what they wanted better, in that way, and there would not be any one chasing them all over the country. They wanted saddle horses, of course. So somebody had heard about the air plane, and told them that Johnny was perfectly mad about aviation, and——"

Sudden turned, and took her by the shoulders. "Mary V., who was that man? Don't try to shield him, because I shall——"

"The very idea! I don't want to shield him at all. I merely want Jake, without any strings on him whatever. Because he can go like the very dickens, and I want to keep an eye on Tex myself. He won't pay any attention——"

"Tex! Good Lord! Bill, you——"

"Listen, dad, I think I *deserve* to have Jake. You know I can ride him, and you're so short-handed, and I can watch Tex——"

"Go saddle him up for her, Bill, will you? I guess the kid's done enough to put her on a par with the rest of us."

"I'll say she has," Bill surrendered, a grin splitting his leathery face straight across the middle. "I been watchin' Tex myself, but I didn't know it was horses he was after. I thought it was some woman."

"I can't see what makes men so stupid!" Mary V. observed pensively. "I never did like Tex. I don't like his eyes."

"I see," said her dad. "You ought to've told me before." And he added disapprovingly: "There's a good deal you ought to've told your dad. It would have saved the Rolling R some mighty fine horses, I reckon. I don't know what your mother's going to say about me letting you go——"

But Mary V. had whisked into the house to complete her preparations for the day's ride. Also to escape whatever her dad would have to say in that particular tone. She saw him leave the porch and follow Bill to the corral, whereupon she immediately tried to call Johnny on the telephone.

Failing in that, she proceeded to powder her nose.

CHAPTER XXI.

MARY V. WILL NOT BE BLUFFED.

Old Sudden in the ranch Ford, and Bill and Mary V. on horseback, followed the jogging cavalcade of riders and loose horses toward Sinkhole. Sudden looked pained and full of determination, as he always did when necessity called him forth upon the range in a lurching mechanical conveyance where once he had ridden with the best of them. Too many winters had been spent luxuriously in the towns; a mile or two, at a comfortable trail trot, was all that Sudden cared to attempt nowadays on horseback. But that did not lessen his dislike of negotiating sand and rocks and washes and rough slopes with an automobile. Every mile that he traveled added something to his inward condemnation of that young reprobate, Johnny Jewel, who had let the Rolling R in for all this trouble.

A bend in the trail finally brought him close to the boys, who had ridden straight across country. Mary V. and Bill had joined the group, and Sudden gave a snort when he saw Mary V. maneuver Jake so that he sidled in alongside Tex, who rode a little apart with his hat pulled over his eyes, evidently in deep thought. Sudden had all the arrogance of a strong man who has managed his life and his business successfully. He wanted to attend to

Tex himself, without any meddling from Mary V.

He squawked the horn to attract her attention, and caused a wave of turbulence among the horses that made more than one of his men say unpleasant things about him. Mary V. looked back, and he beckoned with one sweeping gesture that could scarcely be mistaken. Mary V. turned to ride up to him, advanced a rod or two and abruptly retreated, bolting straight through the group of riders, and careening away across the level, with Bill and Tex tearing after her. Presently they slowed, and later Bill was seen to lag behind. Tex and Mary V. kept straight on, a furlong in advance of the others.

The road swung away to the right to avoid a rough stretch of rocks and gullies, and Sudden perforce followed it, inwardly speaking his mind upon the subjects of spoiled daughters, and good-for-nothing employees and horses, and the men that bestrode them and the curse of being too well fed and growing a paunch that made riding a martyrdom. He would put that girl in a convent, and he would see that she stayed there till she was old enough to have some sense. He would have that young hound at Sinkhole arrested as an accomplice of the horse thieves. He would put a bullet through that fool of a horse, Jake, and he would lynch Tex if he ever got the goods on him. He would sell out, by glory, and buy himself a prune orchard.

And then he had a blow-out while he was down in a hollow a mile from the outfit. And some darned fool had lost the handle to the jack, and the best of the two extra tires was a darn poor excuse and wouldn't last a mile, probably, and he got hold of a tube that had a leaky valve, and had to hunt out another one after he had worked half an hour trying to pump up the first one. And what in the blinkety-blink did any darn fool want to live in such a country for, anyway? Mary V. came honestly by her temper, though few suspected what lay under the calm exterior of Sudden's personality.

Thus it happened that Mary V. was not forbidden to ride with Tex. And, not being forbidden, Mary V. carried out her own ideas of diplomacy and tact. Her idea was to make Tex believe that she liked him better than the other boys. Just what she would gain by that, Mary V. did not stop to wonder. It was the approved form of diplomacy employed by all the leading heroines of ancient and modern fiction, and of film drama, and was warranted to produce results in the way of information, guilty secrets, stolen wills, plots and plans and papers.

Tex was inclined to eye her askance, just at first. He was also very curious about her riding Jake, and he seemed inquisitive about whether that was the first time she had ever ridden him. He was, too, very absent-minded at times, and would go off into vacant-eyed reveries that sealed his ears against her artfully artless chatter.

Some girls would have been discouraged. Mary V. was merely stimulated to further efforts. Tex did not mention the stealing of any horses at Sinkhole. He seemed to take it for granted that they were going to work the range to get horses for breaking, and Mary V. wondered if perhaps her dad had not thought it best to confine the knowledge of horse stealing to himself and Bill—at least until he had made an investigation. That would be like dad—and also like Bill Hayden. Mary V. was glad that she had not said anything about it. She thought she would try him out first on the subject of air planes. None of the boys knew that Johnny had one, and she was perfectly sure that she would detect any guilty knowledge of it in the mind of Tex. She had just read a long article in a magazine about "How Our Faces Betray Our Thoughts," and this seemed a splendid chance to put it to the test.

"Bill says an aëroplane came and stampeded all you boys yesterday," she began with much innocence.

"Yeah. One did fly over our haids. I didn't git to see much of it. My fool hawse, he started in pitchin' right hard, soon as he seen it."

Mary V. paused, meditating upon the significance of his words, his tone, his profile. That there was no particular significance did not in the least affect her deliberate intention.

"I wonder who it could have been!" she said, stealing a glance from under her lashes.

"Hunh? Who? The flyin' machine? Search me!" This time his tone was surely significant. It signified, more than anything else, that the mind of Tex was busy with other matters. Contrary to the magazine article, his face did not betray his thoughts. "Yore dad buy Jake off'n Bill for you-all to ride?" he asked suddenly.

"No. I wish he would, though. Bill just lent him to me."

"Huh! Bill, he shore is gen'rous-hearted to lend yuh Jake."

"Yes," said Mary V., smiling at Tex innocently. "Yes, isn't he!"

But Tex did not reiterate, as pleasant converse demanded. He went off again into meditation so deep that it quite excluded Mary V.

"You-all going to help round up?" Tex asked her suddenly. "You shore can ride the ridges, with that hawse. I guess you-all can bring in more hawses than what any two of us kin."

"That's exactly what I mean to do," Mary V. assured him promptly. "You'll see me riding the ridges almost exclusively."

Tex looked at her and grinned, which did not enhance his good looks, because his teeth were badly stained with tobacco.

"You-all don't want to ride away over in them breaks toward the southeast corner," he advised. "That's a long, hard ride to make. It's too much for a girl to tackle—combin' the hawses outa them little brushy draws. They like to git in there away from the flies, in the heat uh the day. But you-all better not tackle it, even if Bill lets yuh. I don't guess he would, though."

"Bill," said Mary V. with a little tilt to her chin, "does not enjoy the privilege of 'letting' me do things. I shall ride wherever I please. And it is possible that I may please to bring in what horses are in the red hill end of the range. I'm sure I don't see why I shouldn't, if I like."

Mary V. waited for the boys, and talked to them prettily, and wondered aloud where her dad was all this time, and hoped he had not had a puncture or anything. Because, she said, it was bad enough for his temper to have to drive the flivver, without any bad luck to make it worse. She was particularly nice to Bill, and forced him to confess that she really got along perfectly all right with Jake. She comforted herself so agreeably, in fact, that Bill was reconciled to her coming, and paid no attention when she presently swung off to the southeast, saying that she wanted to get a picture of a perfectly ducky giant cactus which she had seen through her glasses one day. Indeed, the dismal honking of the machine called Bill back to the trail, where Sudden came jouncing along like a little, leaky boat laboring through a choppy sea. He rode off without noticing Mary V. at all.

It was a little afternoon, and the boys were eating dinner at the camp set up close to the creek at Sinkhole cabin. Sudden, sprawled in the shade of the wagon, was staring glumly at the sluggish little stream, smoking his after-dinner cigar and trying to formulate some plan that would promise results where results were most vital to his bank account. It would of course take two or three days to gather in all the horses on Sinkhole range, and the restless lot in the corral yonder might be a large or a small part of the entire number down there. Sudden was not worrying so much over those that were left, as he was over what had been stolen. It seemed to him that there ought to be some way of getting those horses back. He was trying to think of the way.

"Oh, Bill," he called, getting stiffly to his feet. "Let's get into the cabin and go over those tally books." Which was merely a subterfuge to get Bill away from the wagon without letting the boys know something was wrong. Bill got up, brushed the dirt off his

trousers with a flick of his fingers, lighted the cigarette he had just rolled, and followed the boss.

"Bill, what's your idea about this horse stealing, anyway? If they were going to steal horses, why didn't they run off a whole herd and be done with it?"

Bill seated himself on Johnny's bunk, spat toward the stove, pulled a splinter off the rough board of the bunk's side, and began carefully nipping off tiny shreds with his finger nails. Bill, by all these signs and tokens, was limbering up his keen old range-bred wits for action.

"Well, I'll tell yuh. The way to get at the thing is to figger out why you'd do it, s'posin' you was in their place. Now if it was *me* that was stealin' these hawses—say, s'posin' I was aimin' to sell 'em over across the line—I'd aim to take the best I could git holt of, because I'd be wanting 'em for good, all-round, tough saddle hawses. Them greasers, the way they're hellin' around over the country shootin' and fightin', they got to have good hawses under 'em. Er they want good hawses, if they can git 'em.

"Well, s'posin' I was out to furnish what I could. Chances is I wouldn't have a very big bunch in with me—say five or six of us, jest enough to handle a few head at a time. I'd aim to git 'em over acrost the line first shot. Anybody would do that. Well, s'posin' I didn't have a place that'd take care of very many at a time. Feed's pore, over there, and a hawse has got to eat. These here hawses are in purty fair condition, and I'd aim to keep 'em in flesh whilst I was breakin' 'em—I'd git better prices. And then again, mebby I wouldn't want too many on hand at once, in case some party come along with the gall to loot 'em instead of buy 'em.

"I figger I'd be plumb content if I could take over a few at a time, and let the rest go ahead eatin' grass here till I was ready for 'em. The longer I could keep that up, the better I'd like it. Same as we been doin' at the home ranch, y' see. We didn't go t' work and haze in the hull bunch and keep 'em up, eatin' their heads off, waitin' till we got ready for 'em. No, sir, we go out and bring in half a dozen, or a dozen at most—if we got a place to work the herd in and cut out what we want. We bust them, and git more.

"I figger, Mr. Selmer, that these geezers down here have been doin' that very same way. They had the kid baited with that flyin' machine, so he wouldn't have no eyes for anything else. And he was *here*, so you wouldn't be worryin' none about the stock. And they've been helpin' theirselves at their own convenience—like Mary V. would put it.

"I dunno—but that's the way I figger it. And I don't guess, Mr. Selmer, you'll see none of yore hawses ag'in, unless mebby it's the last ones they took. And I don't guess there's very much chance of gittin' them back, either, because we don't know whereabouts they took 'em to. Way I look at it, you're doin' about the only thing that can be done—cleanin' out this range and drivin' the hawses all up on the north range. That kinda leaves the jam pot empty when they come lickin' their lips for more of the same."

"Well, I guess you're right, Bill. And how do you figure young Jewel not being here? His saddle is out there in the shed, and all his horses are here."

"Him?" Bill laughed a little. "Me, I don't aim to do no figgerin' about Sky Rider. He's got his flyin' machine workin', though, accordin' to Mary V. I guess Sky Rider has mebby flew the country. He'd likely think it was about time—way he gummed things up around here."

Sudden permitted himself a snort, probably in agreement with Bill's statement that things were "gummed up" at Sinkhole. He went to the door and stood looking out, his face sour as one may expect a face to be when thoughts of loss are behind it.

"Where's Mary V.?" he turned abruptly to ask of Bill.

"Mary V.? Why, I guess she went home. Said something about takin' a

picture of some darn thing—she never come on with the boys to camp, anyhow."

"She didn't go foolin' off with Tex, did she?"

"Tex? No, Tex rode after stock. Had some trouble with his hawse. I heard him tellin' the boys. Said his hawse run away with him. Come in all lathered up."

Sudden turned back, went to the telephone, changed his mind. No use worrying her mother by asking if she had gone home, he thought.

"You're sure she went home?" his eyes dwelt rather sharply upon Bill's lean leathery face. Bill looked up from the slow disintegration of the splinter. He spat toward the stove again, looked down at the splinter, and then got up quite unexpectedly.

"Hell, no! I ain't shore, but I can quick enough find out." He brushed past Sudden and took long steps toward the camp. Sudden followed him.

The boys were standing in a group, holding their hat brims down to shield their eyes from the bitter glare of the sun while they gazed up into the sky, their faces turned toward the south. A speck was scudding across the blue; a speck that rapidly grew larger, circled downward in a great, easy spiral.

Sudden and Bill perforce turned and held their own hat brims while they looked.

"Sa-ay, if that there's Sky Rider sailin' around in an airship, he's shore got the laugh on us fellers," Aleck observed, squinting his nose until his gums showed red above his teeth. "Look at 'im come down, would yuh!"

"Wonder where he got it?" little Curley hazarded. "I always told you fellers——"

"Does anybody know where Mary V. went?" Sudden's voice brought them all facing him. They looked at him uncomprehendingly for a minute, then uncertainly at one another.

"Why—she was going to take a picture of a cactus. I dunno where she went after that." This was Bud, a shade of uneasiness creeping into his face.

"Which way did she go? Toward home?"

"She started that way—back toward Snake Ridge——"

"I seen her riding east," Curley broke in. "Jake shore was pickin' 'em up and layin' 'em down, too. I thought at first he was running off with her, but he wasn't. He slowed down, climbin' that lava slope—and after that I didn't see no more of 'er."

Sudden looked at his watch, frowning a little. Mary V. probably was all right—there was nothing unusual in her absence. But this country south of Snake Ridge was closer to the lawless land across the boundary than he liked. Their very errand down there gave proof enough of its character. North of Snake Ridge, Sudden would merely have stored away a lecture for Mary V. Down here at Sinkhole——

"You boys get out and hunt her up!" he snapped, almost as though they were to blame for her absence. "I didn't tell you before, but I'm telling you now, that rustlers have been at work down here, and that's why we're taking the horses off this range. This is no place for Mary V. to be riding around by herself——"

Nothing much was said. You would have thought, to look at them, that they were merely in a hurry to get back to the work. Nevertheless, if it should happen that Mary V. was being annoyed, or in any danger, it would go hard with the miscreants if the Rolling R boys once came within sight of them.

CHAPTER XXII.

LUCK TURNS TRAITOR.

Johnny Jewel, carrying the propeller balanced on his shoulder and his rifle in the other hand—and perspiring freely with the task—came hurrying through the sagebrush, following the faint trail his own eager feet had worn in the sand. His eyes were turned frowning upon the ground, his lips were set together in the line of stubbornness.

He tilted the propeller against the adobe wall of the cabin, and went in without noticing that the door was open

instead of closed as he had left it. He was at the telephone when Sudden stepped in after him. Johnny looked over his shoulder with wide, startled eyes.

"Oh! I was just going to call up the ranch," he said, with the brusqueness of a man whose mind is concentrated on one thing.

"What you want of the ranch?" Sudden's tone was noncommittal. Here was the fellow that had caused all this trouble, and worry, and loss. Sudden meant to deal with him as he deserved, but that did not mean he would fly into a passion and handicap his judgment.

"I want the boys, if you can get hold of them. I've located the ranch where they've been taking those horses to that they stole. There's some there now—or there was. I went down and let down the fence of the little field they had 'em in, and headed 'em for the gap. There wasn't anybody around but two women—an old one and a young one—and some kids. They spluttered a lot, but I went ahead, anyway. There's about a dozen Rolling R horses I turned loose. The brands were blotched, but I knew 'em anyway.

"So I got 'em outa the field, and then we went back to the plane and circled around and come up on 'em from the south, and flew low enough to scare 'em good, but not enough to scatter 'em like that bunch up at the ranch scattered. They high-tailed it this way, and I guess they'll keep coming, all right, if they aren't turned back again. The boys can pick 'em up.

"If the boys could come down, I think they could get a whack at the rustlers themselves. I got a sight of 'em, with a little bunch of horses, as I was coming back. Far as I could see, they didn't notice the plane—we were high, and soon as I saw 'em I had Bland shut off the motor and glide. They must have camped just across the line till they got a bunch together, or something. They were taking their time, and if the boys could get down here right away, I believe we could get 'em. If not, I'll go back and stampede the horses this way, and see if I can't get me a greaser or two. We had to come back and fill up the tank again, anyway. I didn't want to get caught the way those other fellows did. Is Bill at the ranch, Mr. Selmer?"

It speaks well for Sudden Selmer that he could listen to this amazing statement without looking dazed. As it was, his first bewildered stare subsided into mere astonishment. Later, other emotions crept in. By the time Johnny had finished his headlong report, Sudden had recovered his mental poise and was able to speak coherently.

"Been hunting horses with a flying machine, eh? I must say you're right up to date, young man. No, Bill isn't at the ranch. If you'd keep your eyes open here at home, same as you do when you're flying around next the clouds, you'd see the chuck wagon down there by the creek. I moved 'em down here to save what horses are left. The boys are out now hunting up Mary V. She had to go larruping off by herself on Bill's horse Jake, and she hasn't come back yet. I guess she's all right—but the boys went after her so as not to take any chances. I'm kinda hoping the kid went home. I don't like to scare her mother, though, by calling up to see."

Johnny's eyes had widened and grown round, just as they always did when something stirred him unexpectedly. "I could call up, Mr. Selmer, and ask if I can speak to Mary V. That wouldn't scare her mother."

"Sure, you can find out—only don't you say anything about the wagons being camped here. If she asks, say you haven't seen us yet. She'll think we made camp somewhere else. Go ahead."

It did not take long, and when Johnny turned to Selmer he had the white line around his mouth. "She says Mary V. went out with you and the boys, to a round-up somewhere down this way."

"Well, maybe she just rode farther than she intended. But she was on Jake—she deviled us into letting her take him. Bill thinks Jake isn't very

safe. I don't think he is, either. You say the rustlers were away down across the line, driving a bunch of horses, so there's no danger——"

"I didn't say all of them were down that way. I don't know how many there are. They were just little dots crawling along—but I guessed there were about four riders." Johnny started for the door, picking up his rifle from the table where he had placed it. "I wish I'd got after 'em as I wanted to, but Bland kept hollering about gas——" He balanced the propeller on his shoulder again, and turned to Sudden. "Don't you worry, Mr. Selmer. We'll get right out after her. Which way did she go? There's times when an air plane comes in kinda handy after all!"

"You young hound, there wouldn't be all this hell a-poppin' if it wasn't for your bederned air plane! Don't overlook that fact. You've managed to hold up all my plans, and lose me Lord knows how many horses that are probably the pick of the herds—and you've got the gall to crow because your flying machine will fly! And if that girl of mine's in any trouble, it'll be your fault more than anybody's. If you'd stuck to your job, and done what I've been paying you wages to do——"

"You don't have to rub all that in, Mr. Selmer. I guess I know it better than you do. Just because I don't come crying around you with a lot of please-forgive-me stuff, you think I don't give a cuss! Which way did Mary V. go? That's more important right now than naming over all the kinds of damn fools I've been. I can sing that song backward. Which way——"

"She went east. Damn yuh, don't yuh stand there talking back to me, or I'll——"

"Oh, go to—war," said Johnny sullenly, and hitched the propeller to a better balance on his shoulder, and went striding back whence he had come. He had not meant to crow. He knew perfectly well what harm he had wrought. He was doing what he could to undo that harm, and he was at that high pitch of self-torment when the lash of another was unbearable. He did not want to quarrel with the boss, but no human being could have reproached Johnny then without receiving some of the bitterness which filled Johnny's soul.

He routed Bland out of a nap and commanded him to make ready for another flight. Bland protested, with his usual whine against extra work and got a look from Johnny that sent him hurrying around the plane to make his regular before-flying inspection.

Fifteen minutes after Johnny's arrival the plane was quivering outside on the flying field, and Bland was pulling down his goggles while Johnny kicked a small rock away from a wheel and climbed up to straddle into the rear seat, carrying his rifle with him—to the manifest discomfort of Bland, who was "gun-shy."

"Fly a kinda zigzag course east till I tell yuh to swing south," Johnny called, close to Bland's ear. "Miss Selmer's off that way somewhere. If you see her, don't fly low enough to scare her horse—keep away a little and hunt a landing. I'll tell yuh when to land, same as before."

He settled back, and Bland nodded, glanced right and left, eased the motor on and started. They took the air and climbed steadily, circling until they had the altitude Johnny wanted. Then, swinging away toward Snake Ridge, they worked eastward. Johnny did not use the controls at all. He wanted all his mind for scanning the country spread out below them.

Ridges, arroyos, brushy flats—Johnny's eyes went over them all. Almost before they had completed the first circle he spied a rider, then two—and over to the right a couple more, scattered out and riding eastward. Johnny wished that he could have speech with the boys, could tell them what he meant to do. But he knew too well how the horses would feel about the plane, so he kept on, skimming high over their heads like a great, humming dragon fly. He saw them crane necks to watch him, saw the horses plunge and try to bolt.

Then they were far behind, and his eyes were searching anxiously the landscape below.

Mary V., it occurred to him suddenly, might be lying hurt. Jake might have thrown her—though on second thought that was not likely, for Mary V. was too good a rider to be thrown unless a horse pitched rather viciously. Jake would run away, would rear and plunge and sidle when fear gripped him, or his temper was up, but Johnny had never heard of his pitching. Jake was not a range-bred horse, and if there was a buck jump in his system it had never betrayed itself. After all, Mary V.'s chance of lying hurt was minimized by the very fact that she rode Jake.

Red Hill came sliding rapidly toward them. Now it was beneath, and the plane had risen sharply to the air current that flowed steadily over the hill. It swooped down again—they were over the flat where he had seen the riders. The line of fence showed like knotted thread drawn across the land. And within it was no Mary V.

Johnny tapped Bland's shoulder for a circle to the north, hoping that she might be riding back that way. He strained his eyes, and saw tiny dots of horses feeding quietly, but no rider moving anywhere. He sent Bland swinging southward, while he leaned a little and watched the swift-sliding panorama of arid land beneath. It was a rough country, as Tex had said. To look for one little moving speck in all that veined network of little ridges and draws was enough to tax quicker, keener eyes than Johnny Jewel's.

But Johnny would not think of failure. Somewhere he would see her; he would circle and seek until he did find her—if she were there.

They reached the south fence, left it dwindling behind them. Minutes brought them over the invisible line which divides lawful country from lawless. They went on, until Johnny spied again the group of stolen horses being herded loosely in a shallow arroyo where there was a little sparse grass. The men he did not at first see, save the one on herd. Then he thought he could detect them sprawled in the shade of a few stunted trees.

Apparently they felt safe, close though they were to the line. Indeed, they were safe enough—from horsemen riding down from the Rolling R. So far, they had thieved at their leisure and with impunity. The element of risk had been discounted until they no longer considered it at all, except when they were actually within the Rolling R boundaries. Now, in the heat of the day, they slept as was their habit. Even the herder was probably dozing in the saddle and leaving watchfulness to his cow pony.

Certainly he did not give any sign that he saw the air plane, as it glided silently over.

"What I want, Bland, is to scare these horses back toward home," Johnny said. "We'll come at 'em first from the south, and if they don't run straight, we'll have to circle round till they do. But I want to come within shooting distance of them hombres under the trees. See? So fly as low as yuh dare, when we come back."

Bland threw on the motor, circled and came volplaning back. He did not complain—he left that for times when he was not flying. Johnny raised and braced himself, the rifle in his hands. He was sorry then that he was not an expert shot; but he hoped that luck would be with him, and make up for what he lacked in skill.

The horses stampeded, carrying the herder with them. They ran north, in a panic that would keep them going for some time. As they raced clattering past the camp, Johnny saw four men rise up hastily, their faces turned to the sky. He leaned, took what aim was possible, and fired four shots as the plane swept over.

He did not hit any one, so far as he could see, but he saw them duck and run close to the tree trunks, which gave him some satisfaction. Moreover, they were afoot. Not a single horse remained within sight or hearing of that camp.

Johnny did not go back for another try at them, though he was tempted to

land and fight it out with them. There was Mary V. to think of, and there were the horses. They went on, shying off from the fleeing horses lest they drive them back instead of forward. Bland spiraled upward, waiting to see what Johnny wanted next. Whatever it might be, Bland would do it—with two guns and a headstrong young man just behind him.

The thrum of the motor stuttered a little on the last upward turn. Bland straightened out the plane, fussed with the spark and the gas, banked cautiously around and headed for home. Like a heart that skips a beat now and then, an odd little pause, scarcely to be distinguished except when the ear has become accustomed to the rhythm of perfect firing, manifested itself. Bland turned his head sidewise, listening. The pause became more marked. The steady, forward thrust slackened a little. Johnny was aware that the monotonous waste below did not slip behind them quite so fast; not quite.

Bland was nursing the motor along, Johnny could tell by his slight movements. It seemed to him that a tenseness had crept into the set of Bland's head. Johnny braced himself for something—just what, he did not know. His knowledge of motors was superficial. Something was wrong with the ignition, he guessed, but he had no idea what it could be.

A sick feeling of thwarted purpose came over him. He knew it was not fear—he felt as though he could not possibly be afraid in an air plane, however much reason he might have for fear. He felt betrayed, as though this wonderful piece of mechanism, for which he had paid so dear a price and which he worshiped in proportion, had suddenly turned traitor. It was failing him just when his need of it was so vital. Just when he had so much to retrieve, just when he had counted on its help in reëstablishing his self-respect.

Bland turned his head and gave Johnny a fleeting glance from the corner of one eye. Bland's face was a sallow white.

Johnny laid down his rifle and carefully placed feet and hands on the controls. Bland might get scared and lose his head, and if he did, Johnny did not want to be altogether at his mercy. Anyway, Bland did not know the country.

"How far will she glide?" Johnny shouted above the sputtering cough of the motor. But Bland only shook his head slowly from right to left and back again. Bland's ears were a waxy white now, and the line of his jaw had sharpened. Johnny believed that Bland would fail him, too.

They were gliding down an invisible incline—and it was a long way to Sinkhole. Johnny began to think feverishly of certain sandy patches that were bare of brush and rocks, and to estimate distances. Now they crossed the line fence and were over the rough country below Red Hill, and the plane was lifting and falling to the uneven currents like a boat riding the waves. Gliding parallel with a dry tributary of Sinkhole Creek, the plane side-slipped and came perilously close to disaster. Bland righted it, but Johnny held his breath at the way the ground had jumped up at them.

Ahead, and a little to one side, three riders went creeping up a slope. They seemed to be heading toward Sinkhole Camp, and Johnny signaled Bland to keep off, and avoid scaring the horses. But the slight detour cost them precious feet of altitude while the nearest sandy stretch was yet far off.

The earth was rising with incredible swiftness to meet them. Several minutes ago the motor had stopped altogether. The nearest landing Johnny could think of was farther over, across Sinkhole Creek. He did not believe they could make it, but he headed for it desperately, and felt Bland yielding to his control.

Rocks, brush, furrowed ditches; rocks, brush. Ahead, they could see the irregular patch of yellow that was sand. But the brush seemed fairly to leap at them, the rocks grew malignantly larger while they looked, the ditches deepened ominously. Over these the frail thing of cloth and little strips of

wood and wire and the delicate, dumb motor skimmed like a weary-winged bird. Bland flattened it out, coaxed it to keep the air. Lower, lower—a high bush was flicked by a wheel in passing. On a little farther, and yet a little——

She dropped, fifty feet from the sand. A scraggy bush caught a wheel, spun her half around, another bush dared the propeller to strike, was sliced by the blade that split with the blow, and the club cut from the bush hurtled back and struck Johnny on the head as the plane bounced and half turned again. It teetered, ran a few feet farther and stopped, her broken propeller blade pointing straight up to the sky, her twisted tail almost touching the sand that was their goal.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DREAMS AND DARKNESS.

Johnny dreamed two separate dreams. The first dream was confused and fragmentary. He seemed to hear certain sentences spoken while he was whirling through space with the Milky Way flinging stars at him. As nearly as he could remember afterward, this is what he heard.

Mary V.'s voice: "Don't be so stupid! If a girl happens to bring in two perfectly banditish outlaws that imagine they are kidnaping her, why must she be lectured, pray tell? If a man had done it——"

Mumble, mumble, and a buzzing in Johnny's head.

Bland's voice: "I don't know as I could tell. He could, if he should come to. We got 'em headed this way——"

Bill's voice: "And I seen him hittin' for the line and headed him off——"

More mumbling.

Mary V.'s voice: "I can't seee why he doesn't hurry! Why, for gracious sake, must a person lie forever out in the sun when he's all smashed——"

Bland's voice: "Not as much as yuh might think, in all this brush.

"I ain't gone over it yet"—mumble—"short circuit"—mumble, buzz-buzz—"went past me so close I could feel the wind"—mumble—"I dunno. I've seen 'em hurt worse and get over it, and I've seen 'em die when you'd think——"

After that it was all mumble and buzz, and then more stars, and blackness and silence.

Piecing together the fragments as Johnny could not do, here is the interpretation:

The three riders, whom Johnny had seen as the plane was dipping to its final fall, were Mary V., Tomaso and Tomaso's brother. Mary V. had gone off to ride the country which Tex had said was too difficult for her—— "And it was *not* too difficult for a person who had any brains or any gumption, and who did not lose all the sense a person had," et cetera. She had gone some distance toward the southeast boundary, and Jake was behaving like a perfect dear. She had seen a few horses, and they had all run every which way when they got sight of her, so she was keeping right along, and planning to just gently urge them toward Sinkhole as she came back.

Well, and on the way back she had seen the young Mexican riding along, and he had looked perfectly harmless and innocent, and he had a rag tied around his head besides, and kept putting his hand up, and wabbling in the saddle exactly as though he was just about ready to fall off his horse. And how, for gracious sake, was a person going to know he was only pretending, and not sick or hurt a speck, but merely taking a low and mean advantage of a person's kindness of heart?

Well, and so she had let him come up to her, and he had asked her if she had any water with her. And she had, and so she twisted around in the saddle to untie the canteen, and Jake kept stepping around, so the young Mexican just reached out and held Jake by the bridle while she got the water—and how was a person to know that he was not trying to help, but was kidnaping a person's horse and herself in the most treacherous manner ever heard of?

And just when she had got the canteen untied, and was unscrewing the cap to give it to the boy, another Mexican rode up behind, and he had the

most insipid smile on his face, and a detestable way of trying to be polite. And he said it was a nice horse she was riding, and he would like to show that horse to his brother, if she would be so kind to come with him. It would not be far, he said, and they would show her the way. And they went on talking in the most detestable manner, and actually forced her to go along with them. They had guns, and they said they would shoot her in a perfectly polite way.

So Mary V. had gone back with them toward the line fence, because the fat one rode behind her with a gun, and the boy had a gun too, and they said they would not tie her hands if she would be good, because there was a swarm of gnats and little flies that kept pestering so, and she had to brush them away from her face.

They kept down in hollows, and mostly they had to go single file, with the boy in front and the detestable one behind. But after a while they had to climb over a ridge, and the horses were picking their own way, and the horrid one got off to one side, where Mary V. could see him out of the corner of her eye. And he was not watching her very closely, and the gun was not pointing at her as she naturally supposed it would be, from what he said.

So Mary V. very carefully turned in her heel, and watched her chance, and gave Jake a kick in the ribs. And Jake did exactly as a person expected, and gave a big jump against the horse of the boy.

And the fat one did not shoot after all, because he thought it was Jake that did it himself. So Mary V., having reached into her riding shirt and got her gun, whirled Jake around and took a shot at the fat one before he saw what she meant to do. And she hit him in the hand where he was holding the gun across the saddle horn—which was careless of him, but of course he never *dreamed* that Mary V. had a gun and would use it.

So the gun dropped on the ground, and the man tried to grab his hand and his side at the same time, because the bullet hit his side too. And then Mary V. got Jake down off his hind feet where he had stood with surprise, and made the boy drop his gun. And they were there on the ground yet, just where they dropped them, because Mary V. thought they were safer there than being picked up by any one present.

So that was all there was to it. The fat one was all wilted down in the saddle, and their ponies were used to shooting and just stopped and stood there thankful that they had an excuse, because the poor things were terribly hot and sweaty and tired. And Mary V. made the boy get off and back up to her, which was some trouble on account of Jake and the gun she had to hold ready to shoot, so she only had one hand for Jake, really.

And she was going to take the rag off his head to tie his hands the best she could under the circumstances, but the boy would not do as she said, but instead tried to run away and duck into the bushes. And that was how the boy got shot in the leg. It seemed a pity to do it; still, a person couldn't surely be expected to tie outlaws and hold a gun, Jake and everything, and not mess them up any. He seemed a kind of nice boy, and his tricky ways were no doubt because he had not been raised properly.

So she made him get on his horse, which was difficult on account of being shot in the leg, and then it seemed cruel and unnecessary to tie him, because they had both been sufficiently shot by her to know what they might expect if they did it again. And that was how it happened that she drove them both ahead of her without being tied or anything, as a person would naturally expect outlaws and horse thieves and kidnapers would be. But Mary V. would like to know how, for gracious sake, a person could do *everything* right, with a horse to manage and a gun to hold, and only two hands to their name?

What Bill had said was that he had kept an eye on Tex, because it looked to him like Tex was at the bottom of

the whole business. He had seen Tex working away from the others, innocent as a hen turkey with a nest hid out in the weeds. Bill had done some innocent kinda sidlin' off, himself, and he had seen Tex suddenly duck into a narrow wash and disappear.

Wherefore, knowing the country even better than did Tex, Bill had ducked into another draw that would intercept Tex, if Tex was going where Bill guessed he was aiming to go. Tex must have aimed that way, because Bill got him and brought him back with his hands tied behind him and his gun riding in Bill's holster, and with no bullet holes in his person—such as Mary V.'s captives carried.

Johnny did not know that the other boys had been signaled back with shots, and that the prisoners had been turned over to them while Bill, Bland and Mary V. stayed with Johnny, and waited for Sudden to negotiate that rough stretch of country with the Ford. That was what Mary V.'s voice referred to when she couldn't see why he didn't hurry. There were long gaps when Johnny heard nothing at all.

Between times, Bland told their side of the adventure, as far as Bland understood it. He told of the horses they had scared back, and of the horse thieves left afoot several miles across the line. He did not know just where, however. He told of the rancho they had flown to that morning; the rancho that Johnny had discovered a short mile from where he had got the plane in the first place.

The horses which they had turned loose from the field would probably make their way back, Bill said. And so would the last little bunch. But he would send the boys down after them just as soon as they had put the three prisoners away in the cabin with a guard until the sheriff could come and get them. Which would be easy, Bill said. They'd telephone to the ranch and have the message repeated on the town line.

Everything was easy, Bill said, except getting Sky Rider to a doctor quick, without shaking him up too much. And getting the flying machine outa there—though he guessed mebby Sky Rider wouldn't want no more flyin' in his. He guessed mebby Sky Rider would aim to keep one foot on solid ground hereafter—if he didn't go clean under it. That shore was a bad-lookin' head he had on 'im.

Which brought forth questions from Mary V., and the somewhat qualified comfort of Bland's experience.

Johnny's next dream was a nightmare of pain and jolting. He did not know where he was, but it seemed to him that something kept pounding him on the head; something very hot and very heavy—something he could not escape because his head was being held in a vise of some sort. The pain and the jolting seemed to have no relation to this steady beating. The dream lasted a long, long while. And after that there was darkness and silence.

That came when he had been put to bed at the Rolling R ranch house, in a guest room that faced north. A doctor was there waiting for them when they arrived, because Sudden had telephoned him when he had finished calling for the sheriff. The boys had told Sudden that Sky Rider was bad off, and that his whole head was caved in, and that the flyin' machine was busted all to pieces. They didn't hardly think it would be worth while getting a doctor to the ranch, because they didn't see how Sky Rider was goin' to last long enough for a doctor to git to work on him. And it was a damn shame. Sky Rider was one fine boy—and did anybody know where his folks lived?

But the doctor was sent for just the same, and he was ready to do what could be done. It looked, at first, as though that was not much. Mary V. had kept cold cloths on Johnny's head during the whole drive, and the doctor told her that she had made it a little more possible to pull the young man through. He certainly had received a terrible blow, and—well, the doctor refused to predict anything at all. Johnny was a strong-looking, healthy young man—it took a lot to kill a youngster like that. He advised a nurse, and

gave the name of a young woman who was very good, he said.

Sudden telephoned straightway for the nurse, and Mary V. locked herself into her room to cry about it.

The nurse came that night, and went briskly in and out of the guest room. She wore her hair parted and slicked back from her face, and rubber heels, and she smiled reassuringly whenever she saw Mary V. or Mrs. Selmer or any one else who looked anxious. And she never once failed to close the door of the guest room gently but firmly behind her. Mary V. hated that nurse with a vindictiveness wholly out of proportion to the cause.

But when the doctor came he looked so sort of sober that Mary V. was afraid to ask him anything at all. She went out into the hammock on the porch, where she could see the curtains flapping gently in the open window of Johnny's room. And after a while the doctor came out and looked at her and smiled a little, and said,

"Well, have we captured any more bandits? By George, I'd hate to be one and run across you, young lady. I had the honor of repairing the damage you did to 'em—and I will say, you are so-ome bone smasher!"

Which was all very well, but what did Mary V. care about the damage done to those Mexicans? She looked at the open window with the flapping curtains, and then she looked at the doctor. She did not ask a single question, and did not dream how wistful her eyes were.

"Well, our young aviator seems to be —holding on," the doctor observed very, very casually, seeming not to see the question Mary V.'s eyes were asking because her lips would not form it in words. "Better, on the whole, than I expected."

"Then you think —"

"I think we won't worry about it until we have to. They're tough, these young devils."

Mary V. tried and tried to wring encouragement from the words, but it was very hard, with Johnny lying like that and never moving.

They brought the air plane to the ranch, much as Johnny had brought it up from "the burning sands of Mexico." Mary V. went out to look at it, but it seemed too terrible to think of how high Johnny's hopes had been, how he had worshiped that thing—and what it had done to him. She went to her ledge on the bluff, and sat there and cried heartbrokenly.

There it stood, reared up on its silly little wheels, with its broken propeller still pointing straight up at the sky. Its tail was broken, too—and served it right for threshing around like that in the brush.

She had not known her dad was having it brought in, until she saw them coming with it. Little Curley had driven the team, and he had looked as though he was driving a hearse. She did not even know what her dad was going to do with it. He hadn't said a word to anybody, about anything. He just went ahead, as if taking care of Johnny and Johnny's air plane was part of the regular work on the ranch. Even Bill did not appear to know, nor Bland. Perhaps Sudden himself did not know. It seemed to Mary V. that the whole ranch was just waiting, minute by minute, for Johnny to open his eyes, or stop breathing. And the unbearable part of it was, no one said anything much about it. They just waited.

The doctor came again, and he did not say anything at all to Mary V. He stayed at the ranch all night, mostly in the room with Johnny. And the next day another doctor came, and the nurse went in and out of the room sterilizing things and looking so mysterious and important—but always with that intolerably reassuring smile. Mary V. gritted her teeth every time she saw that nurse.

They were going to operate, the nurse said when Mary V. simply could not stand it another minute. She went and sat all curled up in the hammock, not letting it swing, but just keeping very, very still, and listening. There were voices in there mumbling sentences she could not catch. After a

while a sickly odor came drifting through the window, and more muttering between the two doctors. Sudden came wandering up, tiptoed to his chair on the porch, and sat down rather heavily, and twirled a cigar in his fingers without lighting it.

Mary V. pulled a magazine toward her and began turning the leaves idly, her lips pressed tight together, her ears strained and listening still. Ages passed. Twice Mary V. placed her fingers over her lips to stifle an impulse to scream. Then——

"We can't make it. Damn that brush!" said a new voice—Johnny's voice—quite clearly.

Mary V. dropped the magazine and went and put her arms around her dad's neck and pressed her face hard against his shoulder. And her dad held her tight, and swallowed fast, and said never a word.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RECUPERATION.

"Well, thank heavens, she's gone! Perhaps a person can have a minute or two of peace and comfort on this ranch. I don't know when I have ever disliked a person so much. I don't see how you ever stood her, Johnny. For my part, that creature would *make* me sick, just having her around!" As a final venting of her animosity, Mary V. made faces at the car that carried the nurse back to town.

Johnny looked at Mary V., looked after the nurse, and looked at Mary V. again. He had thought the nurse a very nice nurse, with a quiet kind of efficiency that soothed a fellow without any fuss or frills. It was queer Mary V. did not like her, but then——

"I know I've been a darned nuisance," he apologized so meekly that he did not sound in the least like Johnny Jewel. "But I'm getting well fast. I'll be able to beat it in a few days now."

"Why, for gracious sake? Haven't we—er—made you *comfortable?*"

"Sure, you have. Only you shouldn't have put yourselves out, this way. I ought to have gone to a hospital or some place." Johnny looked so distressed that Mary V. could have cried. Only she was afraid that would distress him still more, and the doctor had said he must not be worried about anything.

"It wasn't any trouble. You are being absolutely silly, so I guess you are getting well, all right. I—I didn't see any sense of having that nurse, in the first place. Because I can take temperature and count pulse and everything. I've really been crazy for a chance to practice nursing on somebody. And then when I had the chance, they wouldn't let me do a thing."

Johnny grinned, which was rather pathetic—he was so thin and so white. "Why didn't you practice on the greasers?" he taunted her. "Bill says you sure made some dandy work for the doctors."

"Well, I couldn't help that. I didn't have any way of tying them, or anything, and——"

"Brag, girl!—for Lord's sake don't apologize—it doesn't come natural to you. What gets me is, that I was ripping the atmosphere wide open, trying to rescue you, and all the while you were making a whole sheriff's posse of yourself—and it was you that rescued me. I should think——"

"I did not! I—did Bill tell you the latest, Johnny? You know how dad is—about making people tell things he wants to know, and keeping them right to the point——"

"I know." Johnny's tone was eloquent.

"Well, he got at those Mexicans, and they told everything they know—and some besides. And who do you think was the real leader of that gang, Johnny? And I know now it was his voice that I couldn't quite recognize over the phone. They've arrested him and two or three of his men, and you wouldn't *believe* a neighbor could be so tricky and mean as that Tucker Bly. Stealing *our* horses to sell to the Mexicans, if you please, and selling his own to the government mostly—but some to the Mexicans, too, I suppose. And nobody suspecting a thing all the while,

and Tex in with them and all. And if you hadn't stampeded the horses so they came back to the line, and the boys rounded them up, dad would have lost a lot more than he did. But now the whole thing is out, and really, if I hadn't caught those two greasers, there wouldn't be any evidence against the Tucker Bly outfit, or Tex either. But now they'll all go to jail, and Tex too. And I just think it's awful——"

She stopped abruptly. Johnny's bandaged head was leaning against the back of his big chair, and his eyes were closed. His face looked whiter than it had a few minutes ago. Mary V. was scared. She should have known better than to talk of those things.

"Shall—would you like a drink, or—or something?" she asked in a small, contrite voice.

Johnny opened his eyes and looked at her.

"No, I don't want a drink—I just want somebody to give me another knock on the head that will finish me." And before Mary V. could think of anything soothing to say, Johnny spoke again: "I think I'll go back and lie down a while. I—don't feel good."

He would not let Mary V. help him at all, but walked slowly, steadying himself by the chairs, the wall, by anything solid within reach. He did not look much like the very self-assured, healthy specimen of young manhood whom Mary V. could bully and tease and talk to without constraint. She felt as though she scarcely knew this thin, pale young man with the bandaged head and the somber eyes. He seemed so aloof, as though his spirit walked alone in dark places where she could not follow.

After that she did not mention stolen horses, nor thieves, nor air planes, nor anything that could possibly lead his thoughts to those taboo subjects. Under that heavy handicap conversation lagged. There seemed to be so little that she dared mention! She would sit day after day and prattle of school and shows and such things, and tell him about the girls she knew—and half the time she knew perfectly well that Johnny was not listening. But she could not bear his moody silences, and he sat out on the porch a good deal of the time, so she had to go on talking, whether she bored him to death or not.

Then one day, when the bandage had dwindled to a small patch held in place by strips of adhesive plaster, Johnny broke into her detailed description of a silly Western picture she had seen.

"What's become of Bland?" he asked, just when she was describing a thrilling scene.

"Bland? Oh, why—Bland's gone." Mary V. was very innocent as to eyes and voice, and very uneasy as to her mind.

"Gone where? He was broke. I didn't get a chance to pay him——"

"Oh, well, as to that—I suppose dad fixed him up with a ticket to Los Angeles and so on. And so this girl, Inez, overhears them plotting——"

"Where's your dad?"

"Dad? Why, dad's in Tucson at the trial, I believe. What makes you so rude when I'm telling you the most thrill——"

"When's he coming back?"

"For gracious sake, Johnny! What do you want of dad all at once? Am I not entertaining——"

"You are. As entertaining as a meadow lark. I love meadow larks, but I never could put in all my time listening to 'em sing. I generally had something else I had to do."

"Well, you've nothing else to do now, so listen to this meadow lark, will you? Though I must say——"

"I'd like to, but I can't. There are things I've got to do."

"There are not! Not a single thing but be a nice boy and get well. And to get well, you must listen——"

"A lot you know about it!—you, with nothing to worry you, any more than a meadow lark. Not as much, because they do have to rustle their own worms and watch out for hawks and things, and you——"

"I suppose you would imply that I have about as much brains as a meadow lark, perhaps!" Mary V. rose valiantly

to the argument. If Johnny would rather quarrel than talk about things that didn't interest either of them a bit, a quarrel he should have.

But Johnny would not quarrel. He made no reply whatever to the tentative charge. When Mary V. stopped scolding she became aware that Johnny had not heard a word of what she had said.

"How many horses did your dad figure had been stolen? I mean, besides the ones he got back."

"Why—er—you'll have to ask dad. I don't see what that can have to do with meadow larks' brains."

"It hasn't a thing to do with brains. I was merely wondering."

"Well," Mary V. retorted flippantly, "I believe the wondering is very good to-day. Help yourself, Johnny."

Johnny looked at her unsmilingly. "That," he told her bitterly, "is what I'm trying to do."

He did not explain that somewhat cryptical remark, and presently he left her and went to his room.

Mary V. felt that she was not being trusted by a person who surely ought to know by this time that he needn't be so secretive about his thoughts and intentions. If she had not proved her loyalty and her friendship by this time, what did a person want her to do, for gracious sake?

Mary V. had rather an unhappy time of it, the next week or so. She had, for some reason, lost all interest in collecting Desert Glimpses; so much so that when her mother told her she must stay close to the ranch lest she meet more of those terrible Mexican bandits, Mary V. was very sweet about it, and did not argue with her mother at all. She seldom went farther than the ledge, these days, and she could not keep her mind off Johnny Jewel, even when there was no doubt at all that he was nearly as well as ever.

Of course it did not really matter—but why was Johnny so glum with her? Why wouldn't he talk—or at least quarrel the way he used to do? He did not seem angry about anything. He simply did not seem to care whether she was with him or not. She might as well be a stick or a stone, she told herself viciously, for all the attention Johnny Jewel ever paid to her. She did not mind in the least—but it did seem perfectly silly and unaccountable; she wondered merely because she hated mysteries.

It really should not have been mysterious. Mary V. made the mistake of not putting herself in Johnny's place and from that angle interpreting his preoccupation.

Had she done that she would have seen at once that Johnny was fighting a battle within himself. All his ideas and his plans and his hopes had been turned bottom up, and Johnny was working over the wreck.

She sat and watched him from the ledge one day, and wondered why he did not act more pleased when he walked down toward the corral and discovered the surprise they had been keeping for him; his air plane all repaired, just exactly as good as it had been before. He stood there looking at it with the same apathetic gloom in his bearing that had marked him ever since he was able to be out of bed. Mary V. thought he might at least show a little gratitude—not to herself, but toward her dad, because he had kept Bland and had paid him to repair the machine for Johnny, when Johnny was too sick to know anything about it. Too sick to hear the noise of it when Bland tried out the motor—and the nurse was so afraid it would disturb "her patient."

She saw her dad stroll down that way, and stop and look at the air plane with Johnny. Johnny seemed to be asking a few questions. But they did not talk five minutes until Johnny went off by himself to the bunk house, and stayed there. He did not even come back to the house for supper, but ate with the boys.

Mary V. would have died before she would ask Johnny what was the matter, but she took what measures she could to find out, nevertheless. She asked her dad, that evening, what Johnny thought about his aëroplane being all fixed up again.

Sudden smoked for a minute or two before he answered. "Well, I don't know, kitten. He didn't say." Sudden's tone was drawling and comfortable, but Mary V. somehow got the notion that her dad, too, was rather disappointed in Johnny's lack of appreciation.

"Well, but what's he going to do with it, dad?"

"He didn't say, kitten."

"Well, but dad, he was looking at it, and you were with him, and didn't he say *anything,* for gracious sake?" Mary V. could not have kept the exasperation out of her voice if she had tried.

Sudden's lips quirked with the beginning of a smile. He looked at the end of his cigar, looked toward the bunk house, scraped off the cigar's ash collar on the porch rail, looked at Mary V.

"Well, he asked me how it got here to the ranch, and I told him with a wagon and team, and so on. And he said 'Mh-hmm, I see.' Then he asked me who repaired it, and I told him that buttermilk-eyed aviator he'd had with him. He replied, 'I—see.' Then he asked me what the repairing had cost, and the fellow's wages or whatever he had got. I told him, 'Damn 'f I recollect, Johnny.' And he didn't say a word. Just strolled off as if he'd talked himself tired—which I guess maybe he had."

"Well, but dad, what do you *suppose* he's going to do? He—he's awfully queer since he was hurt."

"Kitten," said her dad quietly, "when you're breaking a high-strung colt he sometimes sorta resents his schooling and sulks. Then you've just got to wait till he figures things out for himself a little. If you force him you're liable to spoil him and make him mean. Johnny's like that. He's just a high-strung human colt that life is breaking. I guess, kitten, we better not crowd him right now."

"Well, I don't see why he should act that way with *me,*" Mary V. complained, and thereby proved herself altogether human and feminine in her point of view.

CHAPTER XXV.

SKY RIDER HAS FLEW!

Just at dawn the humming of the airplane motor woke Mary V. She sat up in bed and listened, a little fear gripping at her heart; a fear which she fought with her reason, her hopes and all her natural optimism. Surely Johnny would not be foolish enough to attempt a flight that morning. He must be just trying out the motor. He would know he was not yet in condition to bear any physical or nervous strain, sick as he had been. And, of course, he wouldn't be so selfish as to make a flight without so much as asking her if she would like to go with him. He knew she was simply crazy over flying.

By that time she was out on the porch, where she was immediately joined by her father and mother, also awakened by the motor. They were just in time. From the neighborhood of the corral came an increasing roar. A sudden rush of cool morning wind brought dust and bits of hay and gravel flying in a cloud. A great, wide-winged, teetering bird thing went racing out into sight, spurned the earth and lifted, climbed steadily, circling like a hungry hawk over a meadow full of mice.

"By heck, the boy can fly, all right!" Sudden paid tribute in one unpremeditated ejaculation. "An air plane using our very dooryard for a flying field, mommie! Times are certainly changing."

Mary V. bit her lip, blinked very fast while she watched the plane go circling up and up, the motor droning its monotonous song like a hive of honey bees at work. It was pure madness for Johnny to attempt flying so soon again. He would be killed—anything could happen that was terrible. She shut her eyes for a minute, trying to rout a swift vision of Johnny crumpled down limp in the pilot's seat as she had seen him that day nearly a month ago, with Bland, white-faced and helpless, walking aimlessly around the crippled plane, so sure Johnny was dead that he would not touch him to find out. If anything like that should

happen again, Mary V. believed that she would go crazy. She simply couldn't stand it to go through such a horror again.

The plane came circling around once more and flew straight northeast. They watched it until they could not hear the humming; until it looked like a bird against the glow of sunrise.

"Hm-mm. I wonder where——" Sudden began, but Mary V. did not stay to hear the rest of the sentence.

She went back and crept into her bed, sick at heart with an unnamed fear and a hurt that went deep into her soul. She gave a little, dry sob or two and lay very still, her face crushed into a pillow.

But Mary V. was not born to take life's hurts passively. Presently she dressed and went straight down to the bunk house, where she knew the boys would be at their breakfast—unless they had finished and gone to the corral. She walked into the old-fashioned, low-ceiled living room where she had first learned to walk, and stood just inside the door smiling intrepidly.

Bud had just finished eating, and was rolling a cigarette before he got up from the long table. The others were finishing their coffee and hot biscuits, and they said hello to Mary V., and went on undisturbed.

"Hello—what's all that racket I heard as I was getting up?" Mary V. inquired lightly. "My good gracious, I thought you boys had started a sawmill—or maybe somebody had overslept down here and was snoring. It *sounded* like Aleck."

They laughed, and Curley spoke. "That there was Sky Rider. He has flew——"

Bud, fumbling for a match, had a fit of genius. He grinned, cleared his throat and began to warble unexpectedly:

"Sky Rider-r has flew into-o the blue,
Ta-da, da-da, da-daa-a-a—
No-obody knew what he aimed to do
Till he wept and said adieu.

"Says he, 'Good-by, I aim to fly
To foreign lands ta da-a——'"

"Oh, for gracious *sake*, Bud! I always knew you were queer at times, but I really didn't know you had fits. So it was Sky Rider riding off to call on Venus, was it? I wish I had seen him start—but that's just my luck, of course. Er—*where* was he going? Or didn't he say?"

"He didn't say. But he shook hands with us and told us we had treated him white at times, and that some day he'd write——"

"Oh, say! I got a letter he left for your father," Curley broke in. "I'll git it and you can take it up to the house." He gave Mary V. a mysterious look and went into the room where he slept.

Mary V. followed him as far as the door, and saw Curley take two letters from under his pillow. Her heart gave a jump at that, and it began to beat very fast when he turned and put them into her hand with another mysterious look. She thanked him and hurried out on the porch and straight to her pet ledge. Her dad's letter could wait.

On the ledge she sat down and with fingers that shook she tore open an envelope addressed to "Miss Mary V. Selmer, care of Curley." It had been sealed very tightly, as though it contained secrets. Which it did.

Mary V. read that letter through from beginning to end five times before she left the ledge. It was not exactly a love letter, either, though Mary V. squeezed it between her palms and then kissed it before she put it away out of sight. After that she cried lonesomely, and stared away into that part of the sky where Johnny and his air plane had last been a disappearing speck. Johnny had written:

DEAR MARY V.: I'm not going to tell anybody good-by. Not even you, or I might say especially not you. It's hard enough to go as it is.

Maybe you won't care much, but I am a hopeful cuss, and I'm going to build air castles about you till I come back, which I hope to do when I have made good. I made an awful mess of things here, and it's up to me to make good now before I say anything to you about air castles and so on.

I told you once that they need flyers in France, and that's where I'm going if they will have me. I've got to fly, and that's all

there is to it, and I can't fly and be a stock hand at one and the same time, because the two don't go together worth a cent, and I have sure found that out and so has your dad I guess.

Well, I can't ask you to wait till I have made good, because that wouldn't be square, but I can say that when I have made good I am coming back, and then if some other fellow has got the start of me, he will sure have to go some to keep his start. Because I am going to have you some day if I have anything to say about it. I'll teach you to fly and we will sure part the clouds like foam and all the rest of it. You've got more nerve than any other girl I ever saw, and anyway I'd like you just the same if you was a coward, because I couldn't help it no matter what you was, just so you were Mary V.

So good-by, and look for me back with my chest all dolled up with medals, because I am sure coming if you will let me. When I get to Tucson I'll call you up on long distance, and then if your folks ain't in the room I wish you'd tell me if it's all right with you, my loving you the way I do. Or if they are in the room, you can just say all right and I'll know what you mean. And anyway I'll write to you, and I hope you'll write to me, because I am sure going to miss you till I come back. I wish I had the nerve to go right up to the house and tell you all this instead of writing, but I know I couldn't do it, so I won't try. But you be sure and let me know some way over the phone. So good-by for the present. Always your faithful Sky Rider, JOHNNY.

His letter to her father was not so long, and it was more coherent. To Sudden he had written :

MR. SELMER.

DEAR SIR: I have decided to fly my air plane to where I can sell it, and will turn the money over to you to help pay for the expense you have been under of having your horses stole. I can't find out how many you lost all told, but whatever I can get for the plane will not cover it, I am afraid, so I will make up the balance as soon as possible.

I want to thank you for all the kindness of yourself and family while I was sick, and before and afterward. You have certainly treated me white, and much better than I deserve, and I certainly appreciate it all, and some day I will refund every nickel you are out on account of having me in your employ. The doctor bill I intend to pay, and the nurse, too, and whatever you were out on getting the plane repaired.

I am thinking of enlisting somewhere as an aviator, as that seems to be my chosen field. I am leaving early in the morning if the weather is all right for flying, and one of the boys will give you this letter, so you will know why I went, and not think I sneaked off. I am fully determined to make good, and when I have done so, I will come back and finish squaring up for your trouble and expense in having the horses stole. I feel that I balled things up bad, and it is my desire to square everything up. I feel that it is merely the square thing to tell you, I love your daughter Mary V., and I hope you will not object to having me marry her when I have made good. Of course, I would not want to until I had done so. And I hope that will be all right with you, but if it isn't, it is only fair to tell you that you won't be able to stop me if she is willing, and I hope she is. So I am merely telling you, and not asking, because that ain't my style; when I have made good I will do my asking to Mary V. And I hope you will not think I have got my gall, because I am very grateful for all you have done for me, and your family also. I will write when I have made some deal to turn the plane so I can send you whatever it brings. Yours truly,

JOHN IVAN JEWEL.

Old Sudden did not say anything when he had read that letter—read it twice, to be exact. He folded it carefully, and gave it to his wife to read.

"The lad needn't worry about paying me for the horses," said old Sudden. "The thieves made good most of my loss, and made a profitable deal on the side, as well. But, now, regarding Mary V.——"

"Johnny's a dear boy," interposed Mrs. Selmer, pleading his cause indirectly. Then she sighed.

Sudden turned in his chair and looked through a window to where Mary V. was sitting very quietly within three feet of the telephone, her album of Desert Glimpses in her lap. Undoubtedly, Mary V. was listening, but she also was undoubtedly waiting for something. He looked at his wife, and his wife glanced into the room and caught the significance of Mary V.'s position and attitude.

The telephone rang, and Mary V. dropped the album in her haste to answer the call. She glanced out at them while she announced:

"Yes, this is Mary V.—it's *all* right! —right on the porch, but it's all right and——"

Dad and mommie took the hint and withdrew.

THE END.

Opening Contraband

By William Hamilton Osborne

Author of "Let's Get Used to 'Em," Etc.

A clever interplay of two of the greatest issues of the day, shipbuilding and prohibition, right on the spot where the riveters must perforce hum a nonalcoholic tune

SO one day in the rainy season the old man sends for me.

"Tammany," says the old man, "how much pay are you a-drawin' as head riveter in this here yard of mine? Is it six thousand per annum or is it seven, I forget?"

It ought to be ten thousand, and the old man knows it, and I tells him so to his face. The old man is Macfarland of Macfarland, Moore & Co., here in Seattle, State of Washington. The old man and me has been chums ever since I called a shipyard strike on him by raising my right hand, and ever since he quells it by raising the little finger of his left. The old man likes me and don't you forget it. There's things the old man's got to tell to somebody—things he can't tell to his missus—things he can't talk over with his office force. And he tells 'em to me. If it's anything particular, he sends for Tammany. So I sits there, patiently grabbing the twenty-cent cigar he shoves across his desk, waiting for him to open up.

"Tim," says the old man, "maybe you don't know it, but the wages you're a-gettin' entails some social obligations—get me? You got to take your place in society, and that means work. I know," sighs the old man, "it's work. You can't just lay around this here yard of mine, skimming all the cream off my profits by stuffing swollen wages in your pocket. You've got to show for your money."

"All right, Mac," I says to the old man, lightin' up, "you spring it quick. I'll be the goat," I says.

"Now," says the old man, waving his hand toward the racket out in the yard, "you thought you could handle this bunch, and I thought I could handle 'em. And we both find out we can't. We can't. My business is running this business, and yours is handling a rivet gun, and we ain't neither of us got the time nor the gift of roundin' up this bunch and keepin' 'em rounded up. And so," says the old man, "that's where this Gay Harriman comes in."

I leans forward. "I get the Harriman all right," I says, "but how about the rest?"

The old man grins. "They call him Gay," he says.

"So," I says, "you're goin' to get Gay, are you? And at your time of life. Yes, yes, go on," I says. "Who is this Harriman?" I says.

"There's one thing he ain't," says the old man, "and that is, he ain't a shipbuilder. What he don't know about buildin' ships, you can just about stuff into twenty thousand editions de luxe. But I'm told that he's a crackajack at handling men. He's a young fellow, and he's a college graduate, and I'm taking him on trust."

"A college graduate," I says, "and you're going to hang him onto this bunch out here?"

"That's what I'm going to do," says the old man, "and you've got to help. Now, Tim," says the old man, "but me no buts and if me no ifs. This here thing is imminent. This young Gay Harriman is imminent. He's almost here—he gets in this afternoon. And he's going to handle the five thou-

sand men we've got, and you've got to handle him."

"Handle him?" I says.

"Ah," says the old man, shaking his head solemn, "this young Gay Harriman has earned his name. His one worst bet is booze. Fact is," says the old man, "it's only strong family pressure that's made me take him on—but I'm told that if he's kept straight, he's an artist in his line. Your job, Tammany, will be to keep him straight."

"I got enemies enough," I says, "without taking on another with the name of Gay."

Well, as it turns out, the old man maybe can't handle five thousand men, nor even five hundred, but he sure can handle one, and that one's me. In five minutes he shows me all about it, and he hammers in the fact that a plate riveter pulling down eight thousand a year, when he wants to earn it, has got a social status to maintain. There ain't nothing for it but for me to make a lightning change into my new set of tweeds, and get my Rolls-Royce out of the garage in double-quick time.

"Now, look-a-here, Ito," I says to my man, "we got pretty-dam-quick to the King Street station, see."

The N. P. from the East is just pulling in on time when we makes the station. The attendance is quite slim, and I soon spots my man—at any rate I makes a quick guess and it happens to be right. I swoops down on a young-ish-looking chap—and believe me you wouldn't know he'd ever had a drop to drink in his life. What's more, I'm glad to see he hasn't got any little dinky German mustache on his upper lip. But he has got something else. He's got a fur cap pulled down over his ears—and he's got fur mittens on, and he's got a fur coat that comes down to his heels. He sees me coming and he hauls off his mitt and gives me a grip that near does for me.

"You're Mr. Macfarland," he says.

"You," I says, "are Mr. Harriman. I don't know your first name," I says, "but I reckon your last one's Harriman. I was told to pick out the handsomest man on the train."

"You must 'a' missed the Pullman conductor, then," he says, "but—my first name is G. W.—George Washington Harriman. They call me Gay for short."

"That's a funny note," I says, "for I'm not Macfarland, and my name is Tammany—Abe L. Tammany," I says.

He kind of wilts. "Abe L. Tammany—not Abraham Lincoln?"

"Abraham Lincoln Tammany," I says.

He kind of chokes over it. Then he grins. "It's a great name—part of it," he says. He takes out his pocket handkerchief and he wipes his face—it's wringing wet with perspiration.

"They keep these cars out here most awful hot," he says, "but look here," he says, "I'm keeping you out on the platform here without your overcoat. Where'd you leave it—inside the station? You'll catch cold."

"Now, look-a-here," I says, "I'll let you into a secret. I ain't one of the firm, and I ain't got an overcoat. They call me Tim Tammany, and I'm one of the head riveters over to the Works. And I'm told to meet you, and there you got me in a nutshell."

"Glory be," he cries, making a grab for my hand again, "I'm glad it's you and not the boss. Come on."

"Ito," I says, "you juggle Mr. Harriman's luggage right quick, and we'll get along," I says.

So we saunters through the station and steps into the Rolls-Royce.

"Some car the old man sports," says Harriman.

"The old man," I says, "ain't got any car like this—this here is mine. Just as soon as my man gets here with your boxes," I says, careless, "we'll show you what this car can do," I says.

He stares at me something scandalous. "I thought," he says, "that you were one of the skilled workmen over at the yard."

"Yeh," I says, carelesslike again, "I was telling you the old man can't afford anything like this. He's working for nothin' a year—he won't take a cent of profit from the gov'ment, but I can't afford to do that and live as a decent

man had ought to live," I says. So I yawns, while Ito stows away the bags, and keeps on yawning, and he keeps on staring. And all the time he fidgets, and squirms, and wriggles in his clothes.

"You got a heating apparatus in this here machine," he says.

I shakes my head. "I'm hot as Hades," he says, "and I don't know why."

"Maybe," I says, "it's your clothes. Do you think they're warm enough?" I says.

"Ought to be," he says, "inside and outside, I got the thickest I could get. I've certainly made a bluff at getting ready for the great Northwest," he says.

As we bowls along, he wakes up to the fact that it's pouring with rain. "Say, look-a-here," he says all of a sudden, "this here is the middle of winter. What you got here—Indian summer?" And he peels off that fur coat and jerks off his cap.

"Nope," I says, "this is just winter, that's all. Blowin' up cold, too," I says, "shouldn't wonder if by midnight it'd be near freezing. Maybe," I says, "we might have snow. We come near having some two years ago."

"Two years ago," he yells, "snow two years ago! Look here, Tammany! Is this Seattle, in the State of Washington?" he says.

"It sure is," I says.

"Well, for the land's sake, man," he says, "don't you know that you're about seventy miles farther north than Quebec is, and that you're about in the same latitude as Labrador? And that this is the middle of winter, or nearly that?"

I turns up my coat collar. "It feels like winter now," I says; "it must be down to near thirty-five above now, and still going down. We can't stand it much lower here," I says.

So I tells him all about the Jap current settin' in along the coast and keeping us warm all winter and cool all summer, and he begins to see that I'm really shivering with cold. And I am. Forty degrees above is what we're used to in this country, and that's low enough for us.

"Now what *you* need," says this Harriman, "is a good stiff drink," he says.

"You've said it," I says, grinning.

"I've been off the stuff for nigh a week," he says, "and a hooker or two would go down right with me. Suppose we try our luck."

"What kind of a place are you accustomed to drink in?" I says, "a barroom or café? You'll find us a bit rough out here," I says.

"Why, to tell you the truth," says Harriman, "I'm accustomed to drinking in a place where they serve something to drink—I'm particular about that," he says.

So we gets out of the car and his eye ranges along the street. And I know what he sees, because I see the same thing myself when I first struck town. There's a café about every hundred feet, and there's a hotel about every other block. And his eye sort of brightens.

"This is some town," he says, "it's got Broadway beat a mile." I can see him counting the gin mills with their flaunting canopies and lights. "Broadway," he kind of sighs, "time was, I could start at Forty-second Street and walk down Broadway to Cortlandt Street, and stop in every place on both sides of the street, and take a drink. Can't do it now," says this Gay, "must be gettin' old. I can only stop in every other place," he says.

"Well," I says, "here's the first place—s'pose we begin."

So we steps into the wickedest-looking joint I ever see. Stained-glass canopy across the sidewalk, side entrance, red lights in the window, and a lot of noise coming out from the inside. As he swings in, a couple of ladies comes swinging out. This Harriman stares at them and stares at me.

"You don't mean to tell me," he says, "that women walk right into the front door of your cafés out here and drink!" he says.

"They sure do," I says.

He shakes his head. "It don't seem right," he says.

"It's the female vote," I tells him, "here they grabbed the vote so they take a chance of grabbing everything in sight."

Well, we swings on into this here wicked-looking barroom, and the noise keeps up as we go along. The noise comes all from one individual standing up on the bar. And he was yelling at the top of his voice.

"Going—gone," he yells, "gone to this lady here for seventy-three cents," he says.

And the ladies crowds around all excited, to feel of what one of them had got for seventy-three cents. And there ain't a bottle nor a glass in sight. But there's a beautiful bar and a brass rail and all the fixings.

"What's going on?" says Harriman to me.

"I agree with you," I says. "Queer place to auction off underwear and fixings for ladies. But that's what's being done."

"There's another place across the street," says Harriman, and we makes tracks for it. It had "Thirst Parlor" done in fancy gold letters on the plate-glass windows. The doors is both open, and in we sails. But there's nothing doing, except that the bar is stacked up with fruit, and the free-lunch stand with candies. So we beats a retreat. After that we stops in various other saloons and cafés, but we draws nothing moister than a shooting gallery, a magazine emporium, a gentleman's neckwear shop and et cetera. Then we dives into a hotel.

"Where's your bar?" says Gay to one of the bell girls.

"Quit your kiddin'," she says, "we ain't got no bar."

"Your café," he says, "your grill, then."

"We're all out of them things just now," says the girl, sassing him with her eyes.

And then this Gay Harriman looks at me kind of hollow-eyed. "Say, look-a-here," he says, "when did this here State go dry?"

So I tells him how it is. "It's not so long ago," I says, "that this here female vote put this thing over on us. And appearances still has to be deceiving. Rome wasn't built in a day," I says, "and a café front can't make a quick change in an hour."

"Rome wasn't built in a day," says Harriman, kind of eager, "and a State don't go dry in a few months. I take it there's places where a drink can be had for money here in town," he says.

You can see I had to get right down to cases, or he'd do it himself. So I takes him to the few places that's known to the inner circle, the first place being a retail stationery store. I leaves him in the back room, then I takes the proprietor out into the front.

"Now, Gene," I says, "you look at what's pinned here to my suspender, see."

He saw. It was a special officer's badge.

"Now, Gene," I says, "this goes. You look that guy over in the back there. You'll see his picture in the paper on the water-front page in a day or two. He's from the East. He's come out to run our yard. You get me? Well, get this. You can hand booze to me, but not to him—that goes, and that goes all along down the line. His name is G. W. Harriman, and you want to cut his picture out of the paper and wear it next your heart, for if you don't you'll be wearing stripes without any stars to them. Macfarland's back of this and so am I," I says.

Well, Gene wouldn't sell us booze. But that didn't dampen the ardor of this Gay Harriman, nor moisten it to any great extent, either. We raked the town with a fine-tooth comb, but it was no use.

"These guys," I says to Gay, "will sell me if they'll sell anybody, but it's no go. The female vote," I says, "has wrought this fearful havoc, but what's a man to do? I ain't had a drop in months," I says, "so there you are."

Well, there he was and there it was. There was nothing left but to start in talking shop, so we does it in a Pike

Street den of vice, where Harriman has a Pike Place cocktail with ice cream in it, and I draw a Second Avenue smash with whipped-cream froth on top.

And then this Gay lets loose. Now, take this from me: You never like a man you don't know. That goes. I never liked Macfarland until I got to know him, and he never takes to me until he knows me. From the start I was against this Harriman, but, all of a sudden, he opens up—and I see right off why it is he can handle any gang he puts his mind to handle. For inside half an hour I knows him inside and out.

"Now, Tim," he says, after he's told me what a kind of a fizzle he's made—it seems he was a crackajack, all-round track man and hammer thrower and shot putter, and broke more records than was ever made—and it seems when he gets out of college he forgets there's anything but good sport in life—and he's drifted around from pillar to post, always in touch with a gang of good fellows—and his latest job is handling an athletic club in New York, coach, manager and everything. And he knows his job—only his job hasn't got him anywhere. "Now, Tim," he says, "I'm shaky about this job ahead of me. Five thousand men—that's a job for Hurley or for McAdoo, but not for me. But I got to make good, and I'm going to tell you why——"

So he hauls out this picture of his girl, and believe me, there ain't any girl on the Pacific coast can touch her, save my missus. She's a humdinger for a fact.

"Now, Tim," says this here Gay Harriman, "I'm showing you all there is to show. That girl is Rosalie—Rosalie Deane, she is, and I'm strong for her, Tim, and she's strong for me. And who am I? I'm a poor, miserable son of a gun who can get his name and his picture in any newspaper in the country. I'm known in every university and athletic club this side of Hades. My name's a household word in the lobbies of hotels. I got a hundred thousand friends. I believe if the government wasn't particular as to age or wind, I could corral a unit of fifty thousand men who'd sail for France on my say-so—they wouldn't last long, but they'd go. And what of it? I'm spoiled—just plain spoiled. Tim," he says, "you get this. I'm straight, and I'm sound as a dollar. But I've never stopped playing and gone to work. And I won't take Rosalie until my middle name is work. Now, look-a-here, Tim," he says, "Gay's been my middle name all right. It fits. And I've sort of lost my cunning. Five thousand men—I don't want to bite off more than I can chew. I want help—I got to have some help—I need it mighty bad."

Well, he gets it, and he gets it from me. Harriman and the boss and me has a long talk about it. The whole thing is an experiment; the boss is trying out some new ideas of his. They're all doing it by this, but the old man started it. He was going to put in a manager who was a mixer—a manager who wasn't afraid of anybody, and who could look every Potsdam man on the place in the face and tell him to go to Berlin, and get away with it. And Harriman was his first bet. And he was just as anxious to have Harriman make good as Harriman was to make good himself. And I'm behind them both.

"Mac," I says to the old man, "suppose we start Gay Harriman here in at the bottom. Day after to-morrow we're going to lay a new keel on Number Six ways. Suppose we pick a crew of a few hundred of our best men and let him start on them?" I says, "I'll tip them off," I says, "and when they fall for Harriman, the rest of the bunch will come scroudging up not to miss any of the fun," I says.

"That's the idea," gasps Gay Harriman, eager and shaking with nervousness, "little drops of water, just one step after another, until I get my swing."

So that's settled, and I takes him around the yard to show him to some of my particular friends, and I takes him up on the ways, inside and outside the eleven-thousand-ton steel boats we're building. And he climbs around

just like a cat—that part's all right. But now and then he seems to sort of wonder. "Say, look-a-here," he says, "these chaps—way up there, they don't ever miss when they toss a red-hot rivet—the other fellows don't ever miss catching it, do they?" he says.

I grins. "It all depends on who's pitching and who's catchin'," I tells him.

"That fellow up there—if he dropped one and it hits me on the head," he says, "what will it do?"

"It'll likely go clean through and come out at your feet," I tells him. And he kind of shivers, and we go on climbing up and down. And in a couple of days we lays a new keel on Number Six. There's nothing to be reported about the next few weeks, except that Number Six's gang is kind of offish with this Gay Harriman, and he's laying low, just only making friends here and there, little by little.

He gets along all right except with one man—Grork. Grork is a crackajack riveter when he wants to be, but I'd made a mistake in picking him for Number Six, and a big mistake in putting him up against Gay Harriman. Grork's sullen, and he's something more. He gets to keeping by himself—pulling away from the rest of the chaps. Also, he gets to not minding his own business. Now and then he's found mooning around in the machine shop and the foundry—always with a cuss word on his tongue. He's a big, brawny chap, this Grork—big as the side of a house.

And Gay Harriman sees that Grork's got a grouch and starts to smooth things out. But Grork gives him a surly tongue, and more. One day, while Harriman's climbing around Number Six's hull, something flashes past him and plumps down in the hold. It's a red-hot rivet. He says nothing but keeps on climbing. Another drops down. Still he says nothing, but he looks up to see what's what. And then he ducks. This time the guy up there has got the range—this rivet strikes right on the middle of the crown of his hat. Gay Harriman only smiles and shrugs his shoulders. He takes his hat off and shakes the red-hot rivet into a bucket.

"Lucky I had my dicer fitted with a sheet-iron crown," he says quietlike. He walks away. The whistle blows, and he waits down in the yard, watching the gangs swarm down from the outside and crawl over from the inside. He waits till they're all out. Grork is the last.

He steps up to Grork, still quiet.

"Grork," he said, his face working a bit and his hands shaking, "the first time I thought it was an accident, the second time I thought you'd bungled, but the third time I saw you meant it—and for me. This," he says, without making a move as yet, "is what we do to chaps like you."

With that, without an instant's warning, he swings his hand in the air and slaps Grork's face. It's a slap with lots of pep to it and lots of noise to it, and it makes itself heard and felt—particularly by Grork. Grork stands there for one minute, his face white and stinging—sort of numb and paralyzed. And then he makes for Harriman. Harriman backs away.

"One minute," cries Gay Harriman, slinging off his coat and dancing around on his toes in his flannel shirt, "one minute, gents. Fair play, you understand. Fair play. Fair play! Or if you prefer, I'll take any three of you on at once. Not more than three."

Fair play. It's our middle name. And Grork is like a wasp and a mad bull all at once and at the same time. He's twice the size of Harriman—Harriman is as slender as a young girl. And Grork's drives were like a steam hammer. If any of them had lighted, it would have been good night with Harriman. But here's where Harriman's at home for the first time since I've hooked up with him, except that once when he showed me Rosalie Deane's picture. He's got electric flashes in his eyes, and he's all steel springs—clip, clip, clip. It wasn't any fight. It was just a chase, like these movie pictures. Only it always wound up with

Grork in front and Gay Harriman behind him.

"Turn around and face me, you big bully," Gay Harriman would cry, and then he'd slap his face with his open palm, and that'd sting worse than a driving blow. Finally, Grork hit him, just once, and it was a crusher. Gay Harriman reeled just for an instant.

"No more of those," he yelled, "it's time to end this bout."

So he gave Grork a neat uppercut on the point of the chin that felled his man like a log. Grork lay where he'd dropped. Gay Harriman leaned over him, and felt of his heart, and then he drew some kind of a card out of Grork's pocket. Then he lifted a little whistle to his lips and blew on it three times. As he did so, there's a kind of warning cry, and Gay Harriman, always as quick as a cat, jumps to one side and ducks. No wonder. Three of Grork's friends is after him. But once he's on his feet, this Gay Harriman looks as though he hasn't a trouble in the world. I starts to back him up, but he dances in and out and hither and yon, telling me to mind my own business.

"I said I'd take on three," he says, "and here they are. Come on!"

Well, this time there's no fancy stunts—Gay simply eludes the all-pervading grasps of Grork's three friends, and then clips each one of 'em behind the ear. One, two, three—like that—they drops. And he drags 'em all over to where Grork is laying. And by that time a couple of secret-service men is on the job and two of the uniformed guards.

"You'll find I. W. W. cards on these carrion," says Gay to the officers, with a grim sort of look on his face, "and this fellow Grork has got a note tucked into his pocket in German script. Those four don't look good to me," says Gay, "you can take 'em away." He straightens up again, and looks a gang of over a thousand of our men in the face.

"No trouble to show goods," he says, "if there're any more of you, come on. Do it now."

We does it now—that is, we cheers him to the echo—and he shakes hands all around, and spends a good half hour showing us the insides of the manly art of self-defense. That does for him! You can see for yourself that this Gay Harriman has just about come into his own.

So I drags him into the old man's private room and tells the old man all about it, and the old man hands out twenty-cent cigars to beat the band.

"Now, Harriman," he says, "the thin edge of the wedge—you've drove that in, all right. The hardest part is over. Now, let me tell you. There's nothing that these boys like so much as glory. We must strike while the iron's hot, Gay. We mustn't lose, not one scintilla of advantage. This Number Six ways hull is getting on on time," he says, "and she'll slide down on a sixty-day record even as she's going. But that ain't enough," he says, "it ain't enough for you, and it ain't enough for me. I want to get Macfarland, Moore & Co. into print. You want to get in print. The boys want to get in print. From now on, you can handle 'em, Gay, and you can do something more. You can get that *George Washington* freighter down the ways in fifty-five days. A record! Fifty-five days—that'll be upon Washington's birthday. We'll christen her *George Washington*, and she'll go down into the Sound as a monument to George Washington Harriman, and to Harriman's 'Bully Boys.' Eh, what?" says the old man, "eh, what?"

Well, Gay reels out of the office drunk with happiness, and as he reels out I sees him taking out a picture and sort of talking to it. But when we gets out into the open, there's kind o' wrinkles in his young face, and he's kind of feverish.

"Ah, me!" he says. "Ah, me! We should relax—we should relax."

Which is his genteel way of mentioning that a good stiff hooker of rum would not be amiss.

"Well," I says, "I'm strong for that relaxing stuff myself, but what are you going to do in a State thus wrecked by the female vote?"

"Ah, well," he says, "you wait—wait until the *George Washington* slides proudly down the ways with a quart of contraband trickling down her prow. Then we'll relax," he says, "then we'll relax."

So he makes his preparations forthwith, according. One day, a tramp expressman drives into the yard. And it so happens that I'm just going home, and it so happens that Gay Harriman is there, also—maybe, for all I know, with malice aforethought. So this expressman looks around—looks at me and looks at Gay.

"I got a packing box full of ships' lanterns," he says, "for Macfarland, Moore & Co.," he says.

I looks the box over—it's as big as the side of a house—and so does Harriman, and his eyes kind of leaps for joy. You always see that glow in the eyes of any citizen who beats the Reed amendment and the State statutes at the same time.

"Oh, yes," says Harriman, "that's a special brand of—a special kind of ships' lanterns that I'm going to have the firm try. For the present," he says, "it's to go into my private office," he says. And he winks at me. "Maybe, Tim," he says, "you could give this handsome young stranger a lift."

So I helps the handsome young stranger, and together we gets the ships' lanterns—they gurgled something fierce inside—into Gay's private office, and we sets it in a corner, and the handsome stranger leaves.

"We can't adjust these here ships' lanterns until after the hull is launched, anyways," says Gay, "so we'll wait till then. But I should say that on the eve of Washington's birthday would be the proper time to light up—to light up these ships' lanterns. Just so," he says, "just so."

Well, I don't want you to get the idea that the relaxin' game goes strong with me, not too strong, and yet—well, you know when the female vote comes along and hands it to you, and when Congress down in Washington, D. C., whose business is war, goes out of their way to pass the Reed amendment, it kind of riles a man. And the bee kind of keeps buzzing around in my bonnet.

"We must relax—we must relax," this bee keeps buzzing. And then, of a sudden, I sees my duty clear.

Forthwith I set about it. And good fortune favors me. The rainy season is just about getting on the missus' nerves. She's talking about Los Angeles in her sleep. And it's about the first of February. So she wakes up one morning with a five-hundred-dollar bank note in her right hand, and with the path of freedom laying wide before her.

"How about you while I'm gone?" she says suspicious.

"What harm can befall me in this bone-dry State?" I says.

She goes, leaving me Ito and the car. So I steals into the old man one day.

"Mac," I says, "all over this glorious union, save in this God-forsaken part of the country, the name of Abraham Lincoln stands for something—a holiday. And here even the banks don't close on his birthday. Now a lot of these lads out in the yard here," I says, "come from the East, and Lincoln's birthday was fed to them when they were young—they learned that February 12th was a holiday at their mothers' knees. These boys want to knock off work."

The old man shakes his head. "My men get legal holidays," he says, "but I can't give 'em anything else. Lincoln's birthday ain't a holiday out here, and I've got to work—and they got to work. This here is war years, and I'm out to make a record, and my men are going to make a record. They work on Lincoln's birthday just the same as any other," he says. "Not another word," he says, "that's all."

Which gives you some idea as to why a man like Gay Harriman's needed bad in a plant like ours. The old man's learned to say "No" early and often. He likes the word.

"We must relax," I says.

"So must I," says the old man, "only I got to do it settin' at my desk here for fifteen hours a day. Get out."

That gets us both mad, and puts me

in the exact frame of mind for the dirty work I've got in hand. Out in the yards I've got twenty-five picked men, and I rounds them up. They're my kind, these guys. I rounds them up, and we climbs into Number Six's hull and forms our plans. We forms something else that ought to go down into the annals of the history of this here war. That something else is nothing less than the Society for the Perpetuation of Proper Relaxation. It's got a constitution as tough as all its members has got, and it's got a password: "We must relax."

Accordingly we did. We sets about choosing the time and the place. There's no hotel in Seattle in the State of Washington that dares to permit perpetual and proper relaxation. So the apartments of Tim Tammany is chosen for the purpose—Tim Tammany's missus being the only missus that's gone south. And we selects the time—the time being on the eve of Lincoln's birthday, with a prospect of a full working day ahead of all the members of this here patriotic society.

So at seven o'clock on the eleventh day of February in the year of 1918, the members gets together in my diggings.

We relaxes.

The next morning they're telephone calls a-plenty, but Ito's instructed not to answer none. There's groans and moans a-plenty, and calls for ice and baking soda, and all the other devices known to man that's born of woman. With all of us time passes unheeded. We got troubles of our own. And then of a sudden, along about noontime, in stalks friend Gay Harriman. He walks over three or four of the members, and he pushes his way through Ito's last defenses, and he comes into my boudoir. And he stands there, looking down at me.

"Ito," calls one of the members of this here great society from the next room, "Ito, come here pretty-damquick and hold my head." "Ito," moans another, "get my feet out of this here bookcase so's I can get some sleep."

So this Gay Harriman listens, and looks at me and grins.

"You're gettin' yours, too," he laughs. I turns my face to the wall.

"This," says this Gay Harriman, "is what happens to a man when he keeps off the stuff for a year or so. When the hour strikes, it strikes you good and hard. When do you expect to get to work, you and your gang here?"

"March 1st at the earliest," I groans back at him, "now you go, and leave me be."

"Ito," yells Gay Harriman. Ito comes double-quick time, and gets a few directions, and beats it to the corner and comes back. In less than half an hour this Gay Harriman has got about half a pint of his own pick-me-up concoction inside of every man jack of us, and on top of that he mixes up a pound or so of beef extract—probably on a meatless day—and boils it up with water, and sets us on our feet before he leaves.

"Boys," he says, handing out his swell cigars, "to-morrow morning on the job," he says.

And believe me, that's all there was to it. Nobody knew a thing about it—not even the old man. And we was on the job on the thirteenth bright and early. What for? To help finish Number Six on record time? Not a bit of it—just because we wanted to please this Harriman. So the doings of this here secret society were kept a secret same as ever, and in secret we elected Gay an honorary member. That entails on us the social duty of saluting him every time we sees him and saying: "We must relax."

Well, anyway, in about a week's time this Gay Harriman catches me one day as I'm going home, and he takes me to one side.

"Now, look-a-here, Tim," he says, "Number Six is going through on record time. And she's going down the ways on George Washington's birthday as sure as guns. Now," he says, "Washington's birthday is a holiday, and we're going to christen Number Six some time in the afternoon, and send her down. Now," he says, "it's a holiday,

and I got no official duties to perform, or duties of any other kind. And I feel I must relax. And so I've picked about fifteen or twenty men out of the offices here—the right kind, you can bet on that—and I'm going to hand 'em a little dinner in my rooms on the night of the twenty-first. And," goes on this Gay, "these fellows all know you and like you, and you done a lot for me, and I want you to join our little party. It won't do you no hurt," says Gay, "and anyways, you've been in training for it lately, so you ought to stand the strain."

Well, I accepts.

"Now, one thing more," he says, "this affair is going to be a little wet. And account of that, I may need your help to fetch in the goods. Don't fail me, Tammany," he says, "because there's only one way to relax and that is, to relax right."

At six o'clock on February 21st, while business in the yard is going on as usual, notwithstanding the fact that there's a small Niagara playing on all parts of the city of Seattle from all parts of the heavens up above, two figures fumbles with the lock of the private office of this Harriman, by means of a key, and enters, in the dark. In the corner of the room there stands, furtive and shadowy, a big packing case. Outside in the rain, is my Rolls-Royce, and Ito, engaged in watchful waiting. This Gay Harriman takes one end of the box and I takes another, and we totes her out the back way and signals to Ito to fetch up the car. As we does so, a couple of secret-service fellows slouches out into the open, and seeing them come, a soldier with a gun he steps up kind of lively, too. We're hoisting the box into the car when one of the secret-service men touches his hat to Gay Harriman.

"I'm sorry, sir," he says, "but I'll have to know what's inside that case."

Well, we protests, but it's no use. It don't worry me so much as it does this Gay Harriman. Because, as a matter of fact, this particular secret-service lad is one that's made a record in the city for spotting violations of the notorious Reed amendment, which prevents bringing even the smell of liquor into a bone-dry State.

"Anyways," he said, firm, "I've got to take a look."

So we pries the lid off, and this Gay Harriman, he kind of grunts with surprise. There's a lot of bulky objects all swathed around with bunches of brown paper and excelsior and stuff, and the secret-service man, he draws one of them out and unwraps it, and examines it.

"It's a ship lantern, all O. K.," he says, "and looks about the same as any I've seen in use around here."

"Yes," gulps this Gay, "it was full of ships' lanterns; now it's full——"

"Of ships' lanterns," I says, "so that evens up. But look here," I says picking up a wad of paper, "here's a five-hundred-dollar bill," I says, "and some letter that goes with it. It's addressed to you," I says, and I stuffs it into his hands. He opens it and reads it and we all reads it. It's brief and to the point:

To Mr. Gay Harriman: With apologies and thanks, from the Society for the Perpetuation of Proper Relaxation.

Committee on Glassware.

So this Gay, he lifts up the box and drops it innocent on the secret-service man's toes. "You can apologize to the firm," says Gay, polite, "and be dead sure you put all those ships' lanterns back in place," he says.

We ride back, this Gay groaning every time we pass one of those phony gin mills on First Avenue, until we reach the trysting place. There was our crowd waiting for us, but Gay acted like he didn't want to face them.

"Calm yourself, little one," I says, "there's about fifty dinners a week here in Seattle in the State of Washington, and most of the guests have forgotten that booze ever came swinging down the pike. These guys don't expect booze. They may be aching for it, but they don't expect it. So you're giving 'em a swell feed, and that's all they're looking for. So there!" I says.

Well, he sees I'm right, and the feed goes on, and we get to it and clean

up, and act more or less like human beings according to the respective mentality of each guest. And when we're all drowsing over our cigars, Gay, he has to get up and tell the whole story—how he's violated all the State laws put in force by the female vote, and also the Reed amendment, placed on the statute books by an unfeeling Congress, and paid a big price to get the goods, only to have somebody double cross him, and steal the stuff—paying for it, of course, but only in money. What's money compared with a packing case of booze in a bone-dry State? he says.

"Now, gentlemen," he says, "what am I to do about it?"

"Mr. Harriman," I says, "if I was you, I—by the eternal powers," I says, indignant, "I'd complain to the authorities," I says.

Well, we all got to bed by eleven o'clock p. m., and next morning bright and early, what do you think happens. I'm moseying around in my Chinese blue pajamas and my slip-ons, taking a shower, and having Ito shave me, when something happens. There's a ring at the doorbell, and in comes this Gay Harriman, looking fit as a fiddle, his eyes clear and a fine color in his face.

"Tammany," he says, "I've had the greatest stroke of luck I've ever had in life—or rather it came to me last night."

"What's that," I says.

"The guys that did me dirt about that booze little know they did me yeoman's service," he says.

"Yes, yes, go on," I says.

He pulls out a picture from his pocket, and shows it. "You've seen it before," he says, kissing it before my face, "it's Rosalie Deane. But what's a picture to the real thing. Man alive, she's here in town. She's here in town, you get me! And, Tammany," he says, "how would I look this morning after fighting a packing case of triple-dyed champagne the night before? She's come on for the christening—that's what she says over the wire. As a matter of fact, she's come on to see me—and," he went on, kind of solemn, "seeing as how I've made good, I'll eat my hat with its sheet-iron lining, if Rosalie Deane ever gets away from here."

Well, I attends the christening, rolling up in state in my Rolls-Royce and an English walking suit that'd put your eye out. And the crowd makes way for me as I come along, wondering how the President of the United States could afford the time to run over to the coast to see a little freighter get christened. And I gets there just in fashionable time. And as I looks, my eyes near pops out of my head. For there, standing straight and fine alongside Number Six's prow, there's Rosalie Deane, the girl of the picture. And she's got a big bottle of contraband in her hand, tied at the end of a long ribbon so's it can't get away from anybody. And sudden at a signal, she lifts it high up in the air, and lets it swing.

"I christen thee *Harriman,*" she cries.

And smash, the contraband goes soap bubbling all over the steel plates and Number Six goes sliding down the ways and into the Sound on an even keel to the tune of "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean."

I steps over to the old man.

"I thought," I says, "that this was the *George Washington* that was going to go down to-day."

The old man's eyes twinkles. "For the purposes of this particular ship," he says, "we only used George Washington's last name," he says.

Then this Gay Harriman, he sees me, and makes a dive for me. "There she is, Tammany, old boy," he says, "and what's more," he says, "you see that stone on her left hand, Tim? Quick work!" he says. "I saw her last night, and I saw her this morning, and she knew I'd made good, and I got a jeweler out of bed and put him to work in double-quick time," he says, "and there weren't no banks open, but," he says, "do you know where I got the five hundred dollars that that ring costs?" he said.

Searching the confines of my memory, I kind of thought I did.

Making 'Em Eat It

By Buck Connor

Author of "King Billoot's Tribe," "The Razor Back," Etc.

Press agents, Indians, and the New York fire department get into a mix-up over a new feature in the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show. Told by a former aid of Colonel Cody

MY experience in the show game has taught me that when it comes to downright nerve, no human possesses more than a press agent. Why, some of them will not stop much short of murder to land a story, and that's the breed I want to tell about. Then there is that breed of scribblers who are content to hand in space fodder to the editor as they slip him the "smokes" for the office gang. The latter species are in the majority.

One day before the Wild West left winter quarters—just after I got back from Rainbow with my Injuns—Frank Welsh, our press agent, got several vague ideas in his noodle, and came trooping into the office to unload on me. Frank was new on the job—so new he hadn't been on the lot over two hours.

"Dean," says he, as he slid into the visitor's chair at the side of my desk, "you and I have got to sorta hang together this season."

With certain forebodings of what show folks sometimes have up their sleeve, I swung around in my chair and faced him.

"Yessir," he continued. "With me doing the story work back with the show, and you having charge of the Indians, we can put over some big stuff—big stuff!"

"What have you in mind, in particular?" I inquired, and got out my "makin's" to roll a smoke.

"Well, right now, I haven't anything framed. I want your promise to help frame stuff that the papers will fall for. You know, in this day and age of the show business, the editors are pretty much hep to press-agent material. So it's up to me—I'm gettin' paid to do it—to put over some original stories. Something they'll eat up. That's why I come to you to find out how you stand on the matter."

Of course, my position, and the way I won it, was assurance enough as to how I treated anything that helped keep afloat the good ship Wild West. I nodded my head understandingly to encourage Frank. I wanted to draw out of him something more definite, if I could. I had tried to help press agents before—sometimes to my sorrow.

"We," he went on, "can get our brain tanks a-workin', and I'll bet a century we can make 'em eat it up. For instance, when we play Madison Square Garden. Now there is an engagement where we can get busy—it's a good try-out. New York is the biggest rube town in America when it comes to people swallowing press stuff. I know, because when I handled the press for the——"

"Well, Frank, suppose you get settled on something yourself. Then we'll talk it over. If I think the Injuns'll play up to our hands, we'll shoot!" And I went back to work checking off the Garden's ticket plat.

Frank bit the end off a fresh cigar, pulled his hat down over his eyes and walked out, deep in thought.

After he had closed the door, and I could see him strolling over to watch Becker whipping the performers into shape on the Military Ride, I got out

the story-man's scrapbook of the past season. I turned over several pages to where the clippings were marked *Morning Journal, Herald* and *Times.* I read one or two of the Garden's stories. Just the same old dope—"Pretty Heiress Cowgirl Thrills Garden Audiences," read one of the three-column headlines. I stopped right there, and put the book back in the case. Frank was right. There was about as much novelty to the run of the stories as there was to our stage-coach act. The same old stuff.

Just then the colonel opened the door. "What's new, Dean?" he asked. "Anything more about the New York billing? Have all our people reported?"

"Counting everything, I guess we've got up nearly a hundred thousand sheets for the Garden. And Welsh, the story man, has showed up. Just gone over to watch rehearsals."

"Welsh, eh?" as he took the vacant chair. "Don't think I ever met him. What kind of a duck is he?"

"Well, to start with, colonel, he seems plumb full of ambition—wants to annex me to some of his future plans. But I stalled him off till I get a more direct lead on him."

"Lots of pep, eh? Oh, shucks! that's the way with all of 'em—when they're new. Wait till he's made a few hick towns and muddy lots. Mebby he'll pan out a different color. Where is he?"

I pointed him out in the crowd by the arena, and the old man strolled over that way. It was a habit of his to slip around and get a line on men while they were interested in something else.

The next day Frank unpacked his war bag, and got his typewriter to clicking—he dumped his stuff over in the bill room.

The colonel comes panting into the office. He took off his hat and let down his long hair—it was getting warm. "Oh, hu-m-m!" he stretched himself full length in the chair and fanned himself. I had studied the old man so long that I had all the signs down. That one was a signal he had something on his mind. I turned around from my work and looked at him.

"Well," he began, "what is it?"

"Same to you, colonel. You want to ask me something."

"Dean," says he, grinning, "the next I know you'll be on a platform in the kid show reading mitts, same as them other fortune tellers. But what I was going to say is this: Are you going to have time to help Welsh frame some of his press stunts?"

"That all depends on the stunts—what they are," I replied.

"You know we've got nearly a three weeks' run for the Garden. Unless you do take to it and help him, I can't see how he's going to pull some of it. I've been talking to him—no use doubting, he's got the dope—*if* he can get away with it. I guess mebby he can. He says they'll eat it up."

"Colonel," says I, lighting my cold cigarette, "I've been with you some time now. I started in with you as regular arena hand. You've watched me do everything inside them ropes that any other man could do. I saw the chance you gave me and I took it—the time you let Wallace out, and gave me the job of checking up on the lot. Then you made me purchasing agent back with the show. I tried to make good. You kept your hand behind me, and whenever you got a chance you gave me another shove higher. To-day you acknowledge that I know more details of your shows than you do yourself. Considering all that, do you think there is anything, excepting murder, that I won't take a fall out of? If you do, then you show signs of a lack of confidence in me!"

"Now I wasn't findin' fault with you, Dean! Don't go ramblin' off the range like a milk-fed critter. I'm simply wanting to know how you're going to arrange it. You're doing about three average men's work right now. That's all!" he bellowed.

"Of course I'll help Frank, or any one else that tries to make the show a *go!* I'll find some way to take a hand

in the cooking a meal and serving it, too," I assured him.

"This correspondence, and keeping tabs on these fellows with the swindle sheets is a big job. If you'll get yourself a stenographer, I'll put him on the pay roll," he told me, and hit me a wallop between the shoulders that made me strangle on my cigarette—fire and all—and went down to his car.

When you're on a show lot during rehearsals and you see the razorbacks, with their pull-up teams hooking onto the big red wagons, and hauling them across the long line of flats, and the performers commence to move from the boarding houses and hotels to the sleepers, you can bet your last dollar the show is ready to hit the trail of thirty weeks—providing business is good, and no wrecks send them back to quarters.

Welsh had put his typewriter in its case. He was ready to get into New York ahead of the show, and tell the boys in the editorial rooms just when the stock would come tramping up from the ferry.

I was overseeing the canvasmen moving into the private car what I had laid out to take on the road. I had just sent down all the files and paper, and was waiting for them to return for another load, when in comes Welsh. He was all dolled up like a minstrel man on parade.

"Steele," he said, looking around for a convenient seat and dropping down onto it, with a big sigh, "I have here a skeleton plan of some stunts to pull next week. Look 'em over when you get time and see what you think of them. I've got to get over there and get busy with the advance notices. You'll have your offices with the show in the Garden, won't you? I'll try an' come around before the opening day, and we'll talk it all over," he said, and hurried out to get a seat in the gilly wagon that was making a trip to town.

Sunday morning I was called by the train watchman. I rolled over in my berth, and by the light of an engine on another track, looked at my watch. It was four o'clock. I hustled into my clothes and went down to where the stocks were set off. We turned to and got the arena animals unloaded. It was just good daylight when the ferryboat nosed her way into the slip, with a clang of a bell somewhere down inside her. Up went the gate, and we urged, coaxed and pulled the broncs out onto the street.

I was settin' on Redskin, waiting for the last of the stock to fall in line, when up stepped a couple of fellows. I got them the first jump—newspaper men.

"Where can we find Dean Steele?" one of them ventured. He picked me because I was at the head of the column, I guess.

"Lookin' at you," says I. They introduced themselves and their papers and settled down to asking questions.

We had to stand there for some time. They were shooting questions at me like a machine gun. I was answering them, too—for the benefit of the show. "Of course, we had some thrills in our trip from Trenton to Jersey City!" I told them. "Why, the buffalo, while being unloaded, got unruly, and tried to back trail to winter quarters; and it took twenty of the best ropers in the arena bunch to round them up and haze them to the ferry. I didn't know if any one was hurt or not!"

They walked among the riders and soaked into their systems the more striking types of the range, and made notes.

When I saw the bunch of burros joining the tail end of the line I started. We swung into Twenty-sixth Street, on our way to the Garden. I noticed that out of nearly every window on the street there was one or two or three persons, still in their night clothes, watching the Wild West enter the metropolis. At every corner there was great crowds of people—early risers for this occasion only.

After we had the stock all downstairs I got a paper and went across the street for breakfast. While the waiter was stirring about getting my order for me, I turned over the paper. On the third

page I was greeted with these headlines:

BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST WILL INVADE. VAST ARMY OF SHOW PEOPLE WILL ATTACK NEW YORK FROM THE JERSEY SIDE AT DAYBREAK.

It went on to state that it was a peaceful attack—an invasion that would please New Yorkers with the wonderful array of historic Western entertainment headed by Buffalo Bill, the famous scout himself. No wonder there was such crowds astir. "Well," I thought, "Welsh got a good start on the space racket anyway."

Placing a sixty-car show in Madison Square Garden and getting it ready is no small task. The filling of the arena with earth; the hanging of thousands of dollars' worth of special scenery, and building of parallels for the runways; the hanging of flags and bunting by a small army of decorators, and the placing of countless spotlights requires time and hard labor.

I found myself a very busy person, too. I had selected one of the rooms somewhere up near the roof for my Indians, and got them all located in it. And it was my job to pilot them all over town on sight-seeing trips. My office work kept me up till the small hours of morning. More than once I never went to my room—just took some Indian blankets out of my stock trunk, and flopped down on newspapers for a few winks.

Wednesday was the opening date. All the arena people use the opener to spring surprises in attractive wardrobe. Silk shirts of all colors and hues were dug out of trunks in the dressing room. Saddles slick with polish and shining with silver, decked broncs that could be bought for a third the cost of the equipment.

I didn't see much of Frank. He was busy, too. We were all busy.

The first night was press night. Every man who ever saw the inside of a print shop held tickets for himself and a bunch of relatives. That loosens up the channels of publicity.

The playing of the national air by the cowboy band was the signal for the announcer to walk down the center of the arena and formally open the big show.

A choppy gallop by the band, and in rode, at breakneck speed, my bunch of Sioux Indians in war paint and feathers. From then on, it was one big whoop after another till the bugle sounded and the performers yelled a fitting flourish to usher in Buffalo Bill, The American Cavalier.

The show was running as smooth as a new buggy. But the crowds weren't large. Not large, though they were enthusiastic enough. The weather was against us—hot, with the kind of heat that makes you hate indoors. The benches out in the park held a lot of folks that could have found plenty of seats inside. It's safe to say there wasn't anybody in New York praying harder for a cold snap than us. That would send them all hunting some warm place and amusement, which last we could furnish. And that would help Buffalo Bill to meet the five-thousand-dollar-a-day expense account.

The colonel was a great man to watch the papers. He must have spoken to Welsh—at least I figured he did. Welsh, he finally dropped into the office.

"I've been so busy, Dean, I just couldn't get around. What do you think of the plans, now that you've read them?" he asked.

"The plans are all right, Frank. They're fine and dandy. I didn't get time to study them—just glanced over 'em, that's all."

"Well," he went on, "I see the signs. The editors had a nice visit to the show, and enjoyed it. We've been running over a week now, and they're kinda gettin' used to that every mornin' 'howdy' I give 'em along with the dope sheet. We've got to put over something new. What d'you say?"

"Let's get busy!" And I squared around in my chair.

"Suppose we try out the fire story. That ought to be a good one to put over on 'em. It'll bring the Indians into the limelight."

So Frank and I went over the plans of the story. It didn't call for much work, and it offered considerable excitement. I would have to take my boys in on the deal, so I sent for Little Eagle.

"How, Chickpaw?" he grunted to me as he brushed by Welsh. "What want, Dean? You sends by me?"

"Yes, Eagle. We are going to pull a dance to celebrate our being in the town of big tepees. I'm going to let the Indians have the dance an' *chuck-away* up on the roof. That's a good place, ain't it?"

"Thems good dance place. Indians, them up there lots to see for water where Indians boy go with Buffalo Bill for Europe. Thems see waters all time up them roof. Indians make much sad for them boys die by Europe. Squaws them sing heaps for them boy die. I dunno, mebby."

"That's what that singin' was night before last, eh?"

"Yes, thems get sad much, them squaws. Thems chief speak me for Dean to go by waters some days. Flat Iron, him sons dead by them water. Him talks heap by Indians. Hims camp orator for them Indian now. Hims talk for Dog Dance pretty quicks."

"All right," says I. "We'll give them a *Shunka Wachepee* an' *chuckaway*, too. I'll get pretty fires for light, an' mutton for them to eat, instead of dog. They can have their dance Friday night. This is Tuesday, and that will give me time to get the stuff all in readiness. You tell the boys about, will you?"

"By golly, Dean," said Frank as the buck went out, "that will be a bell-ringer. The press will eat it up! I tell you what I'll do. I'll let on that I am absolutely out of the deal, and you just go ahead and pull it to suit yourself. But we must have some one handy to pull the fire alarm—that's where the kick of the story lays. You can attend to that end of it, and I'll lay off. But I'll happen around with a bunch of the gang. Get me?"

"Sure!" And I turned back to my work.

"Don't even let the colonel in on it, Dean!" Frank cautioned, as he stepped out into the foyer.

I looked up a fireworks dealer in the directory and called them on the phone. Yes, they had red fire and blue fire in the bulk, the man told me. They also had what they called fountains—they gave up a shower of brilliant sparks that looked very pretty when used with the red or blue fire. I had them send up several pounds of each, and a half dozen fountains. I had the cookhouse order a whole side of mutton to take the place of the dogs that were always used in the dance for food.

Then I went up on the roof and studied the lay of it. I knew there were four or five different ways of getting up there. I went back down and got Eagle and Flat Iron, and showed them just how to place the grouped Indians and the buckets with the colored fires. For the sparklers I marked off spots for them all along the length of the roof.

I could see by Flat Iron's actions that it was going to take well with the Indians. He looked wistfully toward the bay, and then chanted the burial song in his cracked old voice.

"Flat Irons him heaps sad now. Him sings for him son by the waters. Him goes for Indian boys and talks them about the dancing for thems boy die," Eagle told me as we walked down the stairs.

"You're sure you know just how to do that, Eagle?" I asked. "We want it to be a fine dance. That'll make the Indians happy to know they have done right by the dead boys."

"I knows him all right. You shows me, and I seen thems place for fires, and what you calls them mark places. I get everything all ready by boys. Lots feathers. Lots paint. Pretty Wolf, him makes much medicines for dances. I dunno, mebby!" he replied, and went to their quarters.

By adding a big feature act—Dare-devil Carey in a leap from the girders of the Garden—the business picked up a little. The indications pointed to a

change in the weather. The colonel took comfort—as much as he could—in the outlook. But the crowds were far from filling the massive auditorium. The show was running away behind in receipts. There could be no cutting out the hundred extra girls of the Mining Town of '49—it would make the act look cheap and unconvincing. From the old man's way of seeing it, there was nothing to do but weather the storm for the remaining two weeks.

Thursday matinée, the show did not make a cent, because it was a charity performance for several orphan homes in the city. The house was filled to capacity, too. The cheers of the little tots put a new vim in the performers. They went at their work with all the dash and daring that was in them. The bucking horses seemed to buck harder, and the riders seemed to ride more reckless than at any other time since the show opened. But that wasn't much comfort to the poor old colonel.

The night show was as good, if not better, than the afternoon performance, but the crowd wasn't. I wanted all New York to see my Injuns in their big act, and I was all the time trying to think up new frills for that Friday night Dog Dance. It ought to bring the Indians into the limelight, as Welsh said. They belonged there—they and the colonel.

Their "Battle of Willow Creek" was the big spec of the show. Let me tell you how it went. The curtain was drawn and showed a realistic mountain pass. In the distance you could hear the faint chant of the camp singers, as an Indian scout rode into the center of the arena. He shaded his eyes with his right hand like the chiefs in the old geographies, only this was real, and searched the imaginary prairie for pale-faces. The singing grew louder as the warriors drew nearer. There was kind of a thrill in that, too. Down the steep trail came a chief in full war paint and feathers. He paused in the pass to wave a hand. Then the band of red-skins with travois, ponies, and dogs swarmed into camp. The squaws put up their tepees and started fires and cooked, while the camp singers, riding the big circle, chanted the "Omaha."

Then we had arranged for the dimmers to turn down every light in the house—that was when night came on—with the "spots" shedding a faint blue and violet on the camp for night effects. There was an Indian trading some ponies for a squaw; the blanket wooing, and the night song by Susie Bone Shirt, who was joined by the camp dogs. That always was a big hit.

In the stillness of the night, a bright white spot was throwed on the pass. A white horse stood there, with a white-haired rider in red shirt and buckskins, with a rifle across his saddle; that was the famous scout, Buffalo Bill, on old Isham. And you can bet he didn't need no announcer to tell it, either.

The cavalry bugler sounded a call just as day was breaking. The Indian outposts hear it and alarm the camp. And the battle which followed was a wonder for just a theatrical scene. But it failed to bring the crowds. There were long rows of empty seats in all of the balconies. The boxes held a scattering of late press passes, and professional people—no more money there than in the empty seats.

When the Grand Finale was over, the colonel, dressed in his street clothes, strolled off across the park to the Hoffman House, looking glum as a defeated candidate. The cowboys and other performers hurried out to meet friends. The ticket sellers and takers had all left. Except for the big electric sign that flashed from the tower, there was no sign of a Wild West show about the place. The Garden was dark.

I looked outside to see if Welsh was around, but one of the watchmen told me he had left with a bunch in an automobile. I was alone, and I was tired; and because I'm the kind that takes a job to heart like I was the owner, I was blue. I walked around the park, calling the New York public a few names. I glanced up at the clock on the Metropolitan Tower, it was right at midnight, so I started on home to go to bed, when I saw sparks snapping in the air from behind the shrubbery.

I wondered what it could be, and I hurried out to where I could see. It looked to be down on Lexington Avenue, and it was getting brighter all the time.

"Some big building sure a goner," I thought, as I stepped out faster. I'm hick enough to like to see the fire engines run.

The flames threw a bright red light against the uptown side of the tower—and then I began to wonder. No this was not Friday—I was sure of that. So it must be a real fire. Then I heard some one screaming—a woman's voice. And men's voices shouting.

"A party caught in one of those fire traps," I thought. "Poor devils!"

It wasn't till I reached the corner that I saw it was the Garden. I thought of all my Indians, and the stock in there, and papers and costumes—I tell you, I felt like ice water had been poured over me. But I had sense enough to pull the fire-alarm box.

"What building is it?" asked a policeman who came running up.

"The Garden!" I snorted at him while we ran. "Can't you see?"

I knew I couldn't get in by the front. I ran around to the Twenty-sixth Street entrance. Some one had already told the grooms that the place was on fire, and they were turning loose every animal in the place and driving them out into the streets. With all the cowboys gone and what few workingmen we had over in some of the beer gardens, the horses had the freedom of the streets. I tried to rush past the panic-crazed animals that nickered and ran with distended nostrils. I gave it up. I went to the front again in hopes that a watchman would be there and let me inside. I had to get to those Indians.

I tried the doors. I rattled and pounded in hopes some one would be there to open them. Around the corner the fire engines were already puffing as they forced big streams up through the water towers onto the roof. The street was crowded, with the cops holding the crowds back. I heard them—and above the din I could catch the high wailing of the squaws. The death chant of my bucks. It was awful.

Through the smoke of the engines I saw some one run up the stairs that led to the gallery, and I bolted for the place, and went up three steps at a jump. At the top platform a hand grabbed my arm, and jerked me to a sudden stop.

"Hold on here! Where d'you think you're goin'?"

"Up to my Injuns!" I yelled at him. "They're burning to death! They'll never find their way out through that smoke!"

"Hell! I thought that noise was down inside where they're runnin' them horses out! I'll go with you."

We threw our weights against the door, and felt it gave a little, but the next smash didn't seem to effect it at all. So I struck a match, and looked at the lock, and I discovered a bolt held it on the inside. We had to give it up.

More truck companies were running ladders up against the building. More engines were arriving on the scene. The reserves had been called, to hold the people back. Captains shouted orders to the firemen through cupped hands and trumpets, to be careful about that roof. I was about crazy with horror. My Indians up in that building cooking alive—it turned me sick. I confess that I cried like a hurt baby.

"Look!" shouted a couple of men. "They're getting out all right—they're saved!" Men slapped one another on the back. Strangers shook hands with strangers. The crowds cheered, as down the gallery steps from the burning building came a bunch of Indians shouting, singing, and wailing.

Off I rushed to meet them. Chief Flat Iron came first, grumbling, with the water-soaked eagle feathers of his war bonnet sticking together like a rooster's wet tail feathers in a rain, and his war paint of red and yellow running in streaks down his naked legs into moccasins that pumped out water as he walked; and the feathers of his war lance clinging wet to the pole, and his deerskin tom-tom sagging flip-flap as he plodded up to me.

I grabbed his bony hand and shook it warmly, and threw my arms about

his fat old squaw, Nellie Burnt Blanket, and hugged her there before all New York.

A hand took me by the shoulder, and I turned and looked into the stormy face of Kicking Thunder.

"What matter them mens?" he raved. "Damn mans sling waters on Indians Shunka Dance! Indians them sad for boys die by waters! Heap sings, dances, talks for chiefs. Squaws cries much. Indians heap mads. I dunno, sure! Me, I'm quit thems show. Go back for reservations. No good them mans for water!"

I tried to console them, but the more I talked the madder they got—and the closer the crowd pushed and crowded with their fool mouths and ears open, goggling at my bedragged braves. I was in what a lady would call a very unpleasant predicament. I named it different, myself.

"Who was it that pulled that fire-alarm box?" a man in a dark overcoat and soft felt hat demanded.

"I did," I told him, maybe because I was honest—or a fool.

"All right," said he, as he took hold of my arm and blew a little whistle. "We'll just take you and your gang to the station house!"

The fire patrols came clanging up to where we stood. The plain-clothes man grabbed Pretty Wolf, who was closest and shoved him inside, and then pushed Flat Iron toward the officer who rode the rear end. When the half-drowned red men were all indignantly powwowing in a bunch inside, he invited me to take a seat opposite him. I accepted the invitation, but I didn't want to.

"What was you tryin' to do, anyway?" he quizzed me, as we jostled over the rough paving to the police station.

I didn't answer him. I was talking sign and Sioux to the boys, telling them how to act disagreeable when we got inside. I will own I was sore, and ignoring a cop is one way to rile him.

"Better come clean with it. I'll go hard with you when you get before the judge!" he blustered, but I just went on soothing them wet Injuns.

At the station the desk sergeant turned his eyes away like it was a sin to look at us. They herded us down the corridors and started to put the Injuns in cells. But they found that wouldn't work. There was too many of them. So they opened up several cells and turned the Injuns loose in the corridors.

When the lights were turned out and things settled down quiet, my soothing words bore fruit. Chief Flat Iron lifted up his best oratorical voice in a sonorous kind of chant that resounded through the station house. He implored his people to have faith in Wagalexa Conka—that's my Injun name, you know. He would see that things came out all right. He was the Indians' friend.

"Oh-h!" they admitted in grunting chorus.

I guess he talked for half an hour or more, with the bucks agreeing to every nice thing he said about me.

The heat of the jail soon dried out the soaked tom-toms. An indignant squaw raised her shrill voice in solemn song. One by one, the rest joined her. It was one of those endless weird chants of the Sioux. The bucks took up the chant, and pretty soon the dancers started walking round and round with uplifted hands as they shouted. To one who did not understand and appreciate the rhythm of that ceremony, it was bedlam. To the Sioux, it was solemn as high mass.

I'd framed it just for devilment, but, darn 'em, they got me just the same. I kind of dropped back into being a savage myself. And I commenced stepping and stamping and chanting the "Omaha" with the rest of them.

"Stop that damn racket!!" bellowed the sergeant, peering through the iron-barred door. "Make 'em cut it out, you! I'll——"

"Come in an' stop 'em yourself!" I stopped long enough to holler back. "See how well you can do it!"

The next morning they shoved some food into our corridor. We wasn't very hungry, but we ate some of it.

They tried handing an Indian a broom to clean up with—it didn't work. An Indian has as much use for a broom as a blind man has for field glasses. I had to do the sweeping, and I'll say it went against the grain.

Along about ten o'clock some officers came in and told me to round up the chickpaws. We had to go to court. I herded the Injuns in line, and with me at the head of the procession we all started, a big burly officer marching on each side. I guess it was some spectacle, but it was short, because there in court was Charlie Fellows, our legal adjuster. There was no trial. We were turned loose, with the judge reprimanding us to never come before him again like that. I promised him we wouldn't.

It took some hustling to get back to the show, and get lunch, and be ready for matinée. Of course, the crowd joshed me about spending a night in the jug. I might name a certain press agent who followed me to my office.

"By golly, Dean!" he began, laughing kind of sheepish, "the papers have got you on the front page—picture of you and the Indians I snapped at the quarters—look here! Why, boy, they simply et it up! The old man's crazy about the thing. Says it's the biggest ever!"

"Oh, sure! Console the goat—and I wish it had of been you, dog-gone yuh!"

"Why, say! What d'yer mean, goat? Come here with me!" he jerked me out into the foyer and down to the entrance. "See that? All of 'em keen for a sight of you! Can you beat it? I'd say hero—star—anything but goat!"

I didn't hear any more just then. I was trying to estimate what sized turnaway it was going to be. People stood in line—four deep—up to Twenty-eighth Street. The ticket sellers didn't have time to sort the money as it came in. It fell on the floor of the caged office. I turned back to my trunk to get in my arena clothes for entry. I was mollified some.

"Oh, Steele!" called Buffalo Bill, as I went past him on the run to see if my Injuns were getting fixed up all right. "Come back here!"

I swung around and walked over to where he stood in the door of his dressing room. I was kind of expecting he was going to explode, but he didn't. He was tickled to death at the size of that crowd, and he mollified me some more.

After the show I went into the office to look over the papers. There wasn't any news, as I saw it, except how a hero by name of Dean Steele had been discovered with joy.

There I was—almost a half-page cut in every paper—and the Indians all mounted on their ponies behind me. I read:

INDIANS GO ON WARPATH. TRY TO BURN MADISON SQUARE GARDEN.

Agent Tries to Force Mutton on Them for the Shunka Dance—Indians Refuse and Set Fire to Building While Dancing the Scalp Dance—Indian Agent a Hero—Saves Them.

I admit them headlines read easy. But I didn't get beyond to the fine print, when in stepped Fellows and the colonel.

"Well," I turned modestly around to collect more glory, "we certainly put it over. Made 'em eat——"

I swallowed the rest. Buffalo Bill wasn't wearing any hail-to-the-hero look. If you ask me, the old colonel was looking pained.

"Put it over!" he snorted. "You done more than put it over—you just about put us under! Read this!"

He handed me a statement from the fire department, and he kept on snorting while I read it.

Answering alarm box A1432, six engines	$ 700.00
Answering alarm box A1432, ten trucks	1,000.00
Answering alarm box A1432, five towers	1,000.00
	$2,700.00
Assessed fine for violating ordinance B9872—1894	2,000.00
	$4,700.00

It was marked paid. I done some quick mental arithmetic and looked out the windows.

The Laughing Mask

By H. E. Haskell

Author of "Odor of Musk," Etc.

(A Three-Part Story—Part Three)

CHAPTER XIV.

EDMONIA CALLS ON TIMOTHY.

WHEN Timothy finally returned to Irwin's he found a note from Mr. McMahon saying that a rush order for some sapphires had come in from Washington, and that he was taking the four o'clock train for the capital in order to submit some stones.

Timothy suspected that his general manager was running away from trouble. But he was satisfied. He had dreaded telling the man that Gur had been unable to establish his alibi, knowing that it would strengthen what was already more than a suspicion in Mr. McMahon's mind.

He remained at the office until half past five. Then he walked to Gramercy and around the park, returning home to sit down to what was a very passable dinner, although he was too distrait to know it, or to notice that Montgomery, although attentive to his wants, wore an even longer face than usual.

The servant went out at eight o'clock and Timothy, left to himself, had just settled down in a big chair under the lamp, with his pipe and a book, which he did not intend to read, when the doorbell disturbed him.

He responded to the peal and found Edmonia again on the threshold, more mountainous and imposing than ever in an obviously new blue silk dress and a flower garden for a hat.

Before Timothy could ask her errand, or even wish her a good evening, she crowded into the corridor and closed the door behind her.

"I reckon you-all don't recognize me, Mr. Seward. It's Edmonia. I's been takin' yoh wash——"

"Surely, Edmonia, I remember. How's the little girl with bronchial affection of the lungs?"

His hand was already in his pocket.

But Edmonia shook her head. "You isn't owing me nothin', Mr. Seward. You paid me off right generous when I come las' time. I jes' dropped in this evenin' to say as how I couldn't take yoh wash no more, 'cause Mr. Showery, my ol' man, has jes' accepted a fine-payin' position."

"I'm glad you can knock off work in this hot weather. Probably Montgomery will know of somebody who can look after my laundry."

"Thank you, kindly, sir." Edmonia opened a cavernous silver-mesh bag, pulled out a handkerchief and mopped her face.

Timothy reached for the doorknob, but his visitor shook her head.

"If you'd spare me your patience for a few minutes, Mr. Seward, I's got somethin' troublous settin' on my mind."

"Surely."

She peered past him. "It's jes' a little advisin' I'm seekin'." Her voice dropped to a sibilant whisper. "That good-for-nothin' niggah, Montgomery Williams, won't be comin' in and interruptin' what I's done got to say, will he, Mr. Seward?"

"Montgomery's gone for the evening, Edmonia."

"Would you mind movin' inside a little? Folks say walls have powahful good ears. I don't want nothin' to overhear what I's done sayin' this evenin'.

"You ain't never catched sight of my ol' man, Ezra Showery, has you, Mr. Seward?"

Timothy shook his head. "I haven't had that pleasure, Edmonia."

"Don't disturb yourself to call it a pleasure, Mr. Seward. 'S far as I'm able to judge Ezra Showery ain't much to look at. Even when he was younger, he was jes' an ornery niggah, and now that he's lost a right smart lot of teeth, you'd nevah roll youah eyes his way, let alone turnin' youah haid. And it's jes' that what's settin' heavy on my mind. Who's ever goin' to buy a statue carved after Ezra? Der's niggahs loafin' on most any corner you could name, that's a heap sight bettah lookin' than my ol' man. Yet they ain't goin' home with great big rolls o' money in der hands what's been paid 'em for posin' their figgahs for statuary like what Ezra's doin' ovah in the Havelock studios."

Timothy smiled, and mentally repeated the old saw about how small a world it is.

"So Ezra's posing at the Havelock studios?" is what he said aloud. "For Mr. Gur, I suppose?"

"Now what's troublin' my haid, Mr. Seward, is how come Ezra Showery by all dat money after onliest three settin's for statuary."

"Models get very good pay, Edmonia," soothed Timothy. "If I were you, I'd sit tight and take what the gods provide. Besides, Ezra may have gone into politics. There are lots of chances there for a smart man to make a stake, I understand."

Edmonia's expression brightened. "Mebbe so, Mr. Seward. Mebbe that's why he done refused to make explanation when I ast him what he meant imposin' a title on himself what he ain't no right to wear, never havin' been a fightin' man, an' too old for the draft. 'You're a colonel's wife,' he responses. 'Hold your own counselin's, and don't talk to no onery niggahs about nothin'. You're goin' to set in a mighty high station before the summer's over if you jes' remember what I warns you!'"

She paused, rubbed a foot back and forth on the thick Indian carpet, then, unexpectedly, burst into tears. Her ponderous cheeks quivered, and she wiped her streaming eyes on the back of her white-gloved hand.

"Ezra says for me to hold my counselin's, but it seems like I got to speak to somebody. They's a mighty heap of whisperin' among the colored folks what I move out among, Mr. Seward. I ain't no clear understandin' of what it means. But Mr. Showery and Montgomery Williams is circulatin' among 'em almost every night, and there's somethin' powahful portendin'. They is one hundred thousand colored folks in New York, Mr. Seward, and they ain't none of us very satisfied. We-all never been allowed to rise like white folks, and they's some of us what's doin' a right smart of grumbling because of it. Ezra's always been one of 'em. He ain't never been satisfied to work in no menial position. Now he's sayin'——" She lowered her voice until Timothy could hardly get her words. "Ezra says that pretty presently us colored folks is goin' to blow ourselves right up to the top places we've been deprived of holdin', formerly. I got a feelin' that they's somethin' mighty terrifyin' comin', Mr. Seward. And I is scared out of my wits, I is."

Something seemed to break loose and flutter on the inside of Timothy. He drew away from the woman, looking at her with startled eyes.

"What do you mean, Edmonia?" he demanded, sharply.

"I can't say no more. I don't know nothin'. I jes' got a powahful scared feelin', like kingdom's comin', sure enough."

"Do you mean there is a danger of uprising among the colored people in New York?"

"I reckon not, Mr. Seward. It don't seem like it's anything so public as that. It seems like it's somethin' more designin' and deceitful. They's whisperin's goin' on. But I's scarin' myself out of my born wits talkin' about it. And I's mighty dubious about that niggah of yours. I don't trust him nowhere, nohow. I's told you now what's been settin' heavy on my mind, but I hope you'll keep your counselin's, and not confide in nobody what this

black-faced mammy has done told you. It's lifted off my feelin's now, so I'll be movin' on. I don't want Montgomery Williams to be comin' along home and findin' me confidin' in you, nohow. Not me."

She broke into nervous laughter and started toward the door.

"Good night, Mr. Seward, and thank you kindly. I's too mighty scared to stay lingerin' around this heah buildin'. I ain't got no confidence, no, I ain't, in that good-for-nothin' niggah of yours."

Timothy accompanied her to the door and waited until the elevator had slipped out of sight. Then he went back to the big chair and his pipe. But it was a long time before he refilled it and began to smoke. He sat thinking of what Edmonia had told him, wondering if there was any real cause for her nervousness.

But finally the unpleasant impression that she had left with him dissipated itself. He dismissed her from his mind for the time being. Gur had probably advanced a small amount of money to her husband. To Edmonia, it had seemed a fabulous sum. As to her fears, she had been letting her imagination run away with her. It was a characteristic of her race.

"She fancied she was on the eve of hobnobbing with royalty," he murmured, smiling retrospectively.

Presently his thoughts went back to Barbara Dwight. As far as he was concerned, Edmonia's call and her dismal forebodings might as well never have been.

CHAPTER XV.

A STRANGE MESSAGE.

It was after midnight when Timothy finally went to bed. He fell asleep almost immediately, relaxing luxuriously after a day of both mental and emotional stress, to be awakened but a few moments later, as it seemed to him, by the ringing of a bell.

At first he thought it was the door, and drowsily hoped that Montgomery had come home and would respond. Then, as it continued to ring, he realized that it was the telephone in the hall. He sat up, yawned, turned on his reading lamp and glanced at his watch. It was three o'clock.

"Wrong number, probably," he muttered, sleepily. "Somebody after a doctor——"

Still but half awake, and blinking as he walked unsteadily to the telephone and took down the receiver.

"Hello! Hello!"

There was no answer. The bell jangled in his ear.

"Hello! Who'd you want?" The bell stopped ringing.

"Go ahead," said a petulant voice, evidently the operator's. "There's your number."

From what seemed far off, then came another voice:

"Call 220 Stuyvesant. Mr. Seward."

"This is Mr. Seward. What is it?"

"Go ahead. There's your number," repeated the operator, impatiently.

"Call Mr. Seward," came the voice from far off. "He'll help."

"Hello. This is Seward, Timothy Seward. Who are you?"

"With my white hand, I salute you, my brothers!"

"What did you say?" demanded Timothy, wide awake now, and trying to recall where he had heard the voice at the other end of the wire. For it was strangely familiar, evidently a woman's, in spite of its hoarse timbre.

"It's the vitals of the system that must be destroyed. Banking houses," a pause, "granaries and mills. A drop of blood to stop—rivers."

"Who are you?"

"Just a handful of you—win the—win——" replied the voice, and now it seemed even farther away than before. "Good-by."

"Hold on. Who'd you think you are talking to?"

"Timothy Seward. Oh, dear! 220 Stuyvesant. There's a train—train for Detroit at midnight. The job's waiting. Written directions." The voice died away, then came again: "Written—a—a black lunch box. 220 Stuyvesant. O-oh!"

"What are you talking about?"

"Good-by."

There was a click as if the receiver was being replaced in the hook.

"Hello! Hello!" There was no answer. Timothy rattled the instrument. "Hello, central! Hello!"

"Number, please?"

"Who just called me?"

"There's nobody on the wire now. Excuse me, please."

Oh, the maddening cut-and-dried formula!

"This is important. Who just called me?"

But central had hung up again. Once more Timothy rattled the hook impatiently and, after what seemed an interminable interval, the operator responded again. He repeated his question, fairly shouting into the receiver to make it more impressive, only to get the same old reply, which was no reply at all. But he would not give up.

"Give me the manager's office," he requested, truculently, and again, after a long wait, another petulant and sleepy voice came over the phone.

"This is the manager's office. What is it?"

Timothy explained that he was trying to find out who had just rung 220 Stuyvesant.

"I'll try to locate the call and let you know," came the reply.

"Thank you."

Montgomery's bed had not been disturbed. He took a step into the room, snapped on the light, and looked around.

Everything was in good order, although the backs of two chairs were draped with carefully pressed coats, and the mirror screws overflowed with brilliant-hued neckties. Stuck in the glass was a card on which a series of questions was printed in very clear type. For want of anything better to do Timothy leaned over and read:

Are you getting fair wages for the work you do?

Are you treated with the respect that a white man in a similar position would receive?

Are you content to be a social outcast?

If not call at —— West Fifty-ninth Street.

We find good positions for competent men, free of charge.

We give the colored man a fair show.

Our slogan is "An equal chance for all workers."

Come and see us.

Timothy smiled whimsically. "So that is what has stirred up Montgomery," he said, then whirled and hurried back through the living room to the hall. The telephone bell was ringing again.

It was the manager at the other end of the wire. But he had been unable to locate the call that had disturbed Timothy.

CHAPTER XVI.

TIMOTHY MAKES SOME CALLS.

Until four o'clock, the next day was uneventful. Montgomery was on hand at breakfast, and when Timothy bade him good morning and inquired how he felt after having made a night of it, replied sullenly that he had attended a little meeting of colored gentlemen on the previous evening. Timothy let it go at that, but he made up his mind to look around for a more agreeable house man. Montgomery had outgrown the job.

Affairs at the office went about as usual, although Mr. McMahon had not returned, and there was no word from him. In the mail there were several inquiries about orders from out-of-town customers, and a note from Mrs. Fairchild asking Timothy to let the question of the fifty thousand rest until he heard from her again. If the bank referred to it, she advised him to say that the thing would probably be cleared up. The note wound up with the clause: "I'll try to see you late this afternoon, for this is no time for lambs to be seeking strange pastures without a shepherd."

Timothy scowled. "Now what does she mean by that," he muttered. "I'm going to have tea with Miss Dwight late this afternoon. I wouldn't miss it for—anybody, and, in the meantime, I've business to attend to."

The business was conducted a little later, and had to do with haberdashery and a new hat. Timothy lunched at

home, and afterward spent a heated hour and a half trying the effect of various sartorial extravagances into which he had plunged.

He had started for his destination almost an hour early, fearing that Mrs. Fairchild would waylay him and make him late for his engagement if he waited, and it was only half past four when he turned west into Fifty-seventh Street, and less than two minutes later when he arrived at the Havelock Building.

He looked at his watch. "She said five o'clock. Almost half an hour away. How'll I spend it?"

The park suggested itself.

He continued west for a block, and had started north again when his attention was caught by a man walking about two hundred feet in front of him. He was dressed in a yellowish suit with baggy trousers and a coat that was buttoned in closely at the waist. The brim of his soft hat was turned down over a thatch of glistening black hair.

"The snake charmer—or I'll eat my hat!" exclaimed Timothy, quickening his steps. "I wonder what he'll have to say about the disappearance of the Finch collection?"

At Fifty-ninth Street the man turned west. Timothy followed, but, before he could overtake him, the fellow entered the areaway of a house in the middle of the block.

Timothy continued after him, but by the time he had reached the building, which was one of those dilapidated structures in West Fifty-ninth Street which for many years now have been given over to colored people, he had disappeared. Timothy stopped and stared up at the house.

The basement windows announced their occupancy by:

THE ELITE EMPLOYMENT AGENCY
FOR COLORED MEN.

The name was painted in ornate gold letters on the glass door and window-panes, and beneath it, in smaller lettering, was the proclamation:

"First-class Positions for First-class Men."

Without stopping to wonder whether or not the place was reputable, Timothy turned into the areaway. Here, possibly, was a chance to find somebody to supersede the sullen Montgomery as house man, also to resume acquaintance with the down-at-the-heel artist who seemed to be on a mission similar to his own.

At the door Timothy hesitated, uncertain whether or not to ring the bell, decided against it, and turned the knob. It swung in, revealing a bare hallway with a painted pine floor and, upon its right, a yellow door repeating the sign on the outer windows.

Timothy pushed this open, then stopped short. For, just seating himself at the shabby yellow desk facing the door, was the long-haired man.

He glanced up as the hinges creaked, then, as his eyes met Timothy's, fairly popped out of his chair.

"*You!*" he exclaimed sharply. "What do you want here?" His black eyes snapped angrily. In his face surprise and consternation mingled.

"Do you run this agency?" exclaimed Timothy.

The man settled into his chair.

"I do." Something seemed to have dropped over his face. It was like a veil that blurs the expression. "Close the door, please." Then, as Timothy complied: "What can I do for you?"

"I saw the sign and dropped in. I'm looking for a house man."

The man shook his head. "We don't supply domestic servants."

"I see." Timothy glanced toward the end of the room where there was a pool table with half a dozen colored men gathered about it; and, behind them on the wall, between two cue racks, a big sheet of paper, painted with the questions he had read the evening before on the card stuck in Montgomery's mirror. He shrugged. "Office and factory positions, I suppose!"

"Um! Work of that kind. We try to give them a fair show."

"It's funny," muttered Timothy. "I had an idea, when I saw you that day at the museum, that you were an artist."

The fellow smiled. "How do you

know I'm not? An artist must live, and I find this a better potboiler than most. I can give a brother a helping hand and, at the same time, fill my own stomach."

"You're doing a good work," murmured Timothy, and started to open the door. He had made no reference to the occurrences at the museum on the previous Friday, nor to the disappearance of the Finch jewels, as he had intended doing. As at their other meeting, the man repelled him at the same time that he interested him, but this time the repulsion proved stronger than interest.

He wanted to get into the fresh air again.

"Good afternoon."

He looked at his watch. In twenty-two minutes he was to see her.

Barbara Dwight, in a blue smock that matched the color of her eyes, exactly, wherever its color was not blurred with dried clay, opened the door for Timothy.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "I—I thought ——" She stopped. "How d'ye do, Mr.—ah—Mr. Seward. I thought it was Durga, coming back."

Her unconcealed disappointment was like a wet blanket on the joyful fire of Timothy's mood. She had not offered to shake hands with him.

"How do you do! I—I'm sorry," he said. "You told me to come at five. It's just that, now."

"Come in, won't you? I've been so busy. I forgot."

She seemed abrupt and unnatural, save for her eyes, which gazed into Timothy's with a sort of wistful appeal, but with none of the shy mirth that had danced in them the day before.

Without further welcome she ushered him into the studio, a big, rather bare, two-story room with no fripperies, just a workshop, as she had called it. In front of the window there was a reproduction in clay of Durga Gur, the wooden support over which it was being molded not yet entirely covered.

The wet clay gave to the air the smell of damp fields, peculiarly refreshing, and the moisture, evaporating from it, made the room cool, like a cellar. To Timothy the studio seemed chaste and clean, in spite of the fact that damp clay stood in little mounds and hillocks all about the piece of canvas on which the framework stood.

Miss Dwight did not ask him to sit down, but the omission seemed the result of preoccupation rather than purpose. Timothy, hurt and disappointed as he was, realized this. The girl was still intent upon her work. Her first words after they entered the studio proved it.

"One moment, please," she said, turning to the likeness of Gur and away from Timothy, who stood awkwardly self-conscious, holding his new Panama and walking stick in one hand. "I was just getting something, when you rang. I'll lose it if I wait."

She stepped upon a block in front of the framework and, reaching up, began to work at the throat of the model.

Timothy, watching her, felt suddenly desolate. How could anybody create the image of another, lovingly, with little pats and pinches as she was doing, growing familiar with every feature, every changing pose and expression, without growing to care for that other, he asked himself.

His gaze went over the room. On everything that would hold them, there were roughly executed heads and full figures of Gur. Some, even to Timothy's untrained eye, amateurish and weakly executed. Others, strong and daring, and showing what a more experienced critic would have called technique.

Timothy sighed, but Barbara either did not hear or would not heed. She seemed to have forgotten his presence, to have become utterly wrapped up in the work she was doing.

Timothy had put his hat and stick on a stand by the fireplace, and sat down to wait until she chose to recall his presence, when, without warning, save for the sound of a key in its lock, the door to the studio swung in and Durga Gur in the flesh entered. As his eyes

fell upon Timothy he stopped short, frowned, changed color, then, as if clapping a mask upon his feelings, smiled and thrust out his hand.

"This is a surprise," he said. "How are things going? Any more mysterious withdrawals?"

Timothy shook his head. "Miss Dwight asked me to tea with her," he murmured, apologetically. "I'm sorry to have interrupted her work."

Gur grinned, and shook his head at Barbara's back. "It's time she knocked off. I quit half an hour ago. She'd have kept me at it until goodness only knows how late, if I hadn't taken the bit between my teeth. She's merciless to her models."

While he talked his nervousness expressed itself in a soundless snapping of his fingers, of which he was apparently unconscious, and, in spite of his efforts to appear natural, waves of antagonism seemed to sweep from him to Timothy. But his smile was as brilliant as ever. Suddenly, he turned sharply, and going close to Barbara Dwight placed his hand over hers.

"Call it a day," he said. "Mr. Seward is here."

The intimate gesture, and the fact that the girl did not resent it, sent a stabbing pain through Timothy. With a vague smile, she stepped down from the block. But her eyes did not seek his. They followed the movements of Gur who was rolling down the sleeves of his soft silk shirt.

"Get out of that smock and clean up, Barbara," he laughed, intent on the cuff he was fastening. "From head to foot you're covered with clay. An awful waste of good material."

"I suppose I am pretty messy," she said seriously, "but under my smock I'm quite fit to pour a cup of tea for you, once I have washed my face and hands." As she concluded she reached down, took hold of the hem of her smock, peeled it off over her head and tossed it upon a bench in front of the fireplace. She was as composed as she had been shy the day before.

She went about her cleaning-up process with what seemed to Timothy an almost brazen frankness, talking to Gur over her shoulder while she washed her hands in an adjoining bathroom, the door of which she left open, splashing water over her face and hair just as a man would do. Timothy looked away. He felt like a trespasser.

Barbara presently reëntered the studio, swaggered boyishly over to the fireplace, and stood rubbing her face and arms with a crash towel.

Timothy grew hot with embarrassment that was as much for her as for himself. This girl had seemed to him molded with a delicacy that had come from within to leave impress upon her features. Now, although her features were unaltered, she was changed. The aura that had enveloped her was gone. She was like a delicate fruit from which the bloom has been rubbed.

Durga Gur, meantime, was paying no heed to either of his companions. He turned down his other sleeve, fastened the cuff, and adjusted his flowing tie, at the same time humming a gay little aria, half aloud, half under his breath.

Timothy, too self-conscious to look again at Barbara, walked over to the clay model of Gur and gazed up at it with a pretense of interest.

"Will you make the tea, Durga," called Barbara from the bathroom, where she had gone to replace the crash towel. "I'm all in."

"Oh, no matter about tea," exploded Timothy, "I'll come some other day, when you are not so fatigued." He turned in time to see the girl throw herself carelessly upon a willow chaise longue. She clasped her hands behind her head, stretched her body, then flung one small foot over the other.

"Got a cigarette, Timothy?" she demanded.

It had come. Barbara Dwight had called Timothy by his first name. It was the moment he had dreamed of last night. He felt the blood surge into his face. But it was not ecstasy that sent it there, but distress over Barbara Dwight's boldness, and a but half-realized resentment because she had destroyed something sweet and delicate that he had been cherishing.

He fumbled for his cigarette case, and, opening it, held it out to her.

"Light one for me, old man," she said, without removing her hands from behind her head.

He took one, struck a match, puffed until he had a good light and then, as she raised her head a few inches and parted her lips, removed the cigarette from his own mouth and placed it gingerly in hers.

She sucked in a breath of smoke, held it a moment, and exhaled it through her nostrils.

Then she settled back among the cushions, puffing and inhaling rapidly. Timothy had noticed that Gur smoked in this same greedy way, burning up one cigarette after another until he had finished half a dozen.

It was but a few moments after Barbara had started her first cigarette that she wagged her hand for another. Then, noticing that Timothy had returned his case to his pocket without helping himself from it, exclaimed, petulantly: "Don't you smoke?"

"Why—yes," stammered Timothy, taking a cigarette and getting out his matchbox.

"Have a light from mine," said Barbara, sitting up, one foot dragging carelessly over the edge of the settle.

Timothy, cigarette between his lips, leaned toward her. Their heads were so close that her hair brushed his cheek. But it did not quicken his pulses by a heartbeat. He was suddenly out of love with Barbara Dwight.

Gur, meantime, had pushed a little tea cart into an adjoining room and, from unmistakable sounds coming from that direction, Timothy knew that he was getting out china and preparing tea, and he continued to hum the aria, finally breaking into song, so that he did not hear the tap of the knocker on the door, as both Barbara and Timothy did.

"Oh, damn," exclaimed the girl, petulantly. "There's some one at the door. See who it is, will you, old boy?"

Timothy hesitated, then at a gesture of impatience from Barbara, crossed the studio and opened the door. On the threshold stood Mrs. Fairchild.

Timothy's first impulse was to refuse her admission, but she brushed past him with a light: "How d'ye do. I thought I'd find you here." Then, gayly: "Hello, everybody—Miss Dwight—Mr. Gur!"

Timothy lumbered after her. His face was hot. He would have protected Barbara Dwight from herself, but it was too late. Mrs. Fairchild was already beside the chaise longue shaking hands with the girl, who was leaning upon one elbow, the cigarette dangling from the fingers of her left hand. And, although she had given Mrs. Fairchild her right, she was floundering for her caller's name. Even her voice sounded rowdyish and unnatural: "How d'ye do—Mrs.—I beg your pardon. I cannot recall——"

"Mrs. Fairchild," supplemented Timothy.

"Oh, yes. Mrs. Fairchild. You are just in time for tea. Durga, do you know——"

"Yes, indeed. How d'ye do, Mrs. Fairchild," Gur interrupted, holding out his hand. But his face was flushed. Like Timothy, he seemed embarrassed for Barbara Dwight.

"Miss Dwight's been overworking again," he said, apologetically. "I'm making tea while she loafs. Modeling's the most tiring work on earth—altogether too hard for a girl."

"I know," nodded Mrs. Fairchild, sinking upon a cushioned bench and signaling Timothy to join her. "I used to work in clay. Nothing wonderful like that——" She twisted and looked at the figure of Gur. "But seeing you two workers has stimulated my ambitions. I'm going to try my hand at it again. I—I've rented a studio."

"Indeed," exclaimed Gur, politely.

"Hot stuff," said Barbara.

"It's what brought me here to-day. It's furnished, but I've been fussing in it for hours—rearranging and settling things. I knew Timothy was coming here for tea, and I thought another cup would not matter. I'm famishing."

If she was shocked at Barbara's attitude she did not show it.

"And tea is ready," said Gur, smiling as if somebody had said something funny. "I'll bring it in."

"Shall I pour?" asked Mrs. Fairchild, turning to Barbara.

"I will," replied the girl, sitting up and settling both feet on the ground. Her skirt was twisted awkwardly. Her hair was in disorder. But she seemed unaware of it.

"Get Mrs. Fairchild a cigarette, Timothy," she said curtly.

A soft pink suffused Mrs. Fairchild's temples.

"No, no. Don't trouble yourself, Timothy," she remonstrated then, as Barbara lifted her shoulders and flicked an ash in the direction of the fireplace: "A cigarette doesn't become a woman of my age."

"Oh, the devil!" laughed Barbara, flinging one leg over the other and bending forward to rest one elbow on her knee.

At this point Gur rolled in the tea wagon and Barbara, cigarette hanging from the corner of her mouth, picked up the tea ball and dropped it into Mrs. Fairchild's cup. Then she reached for the kettle that bubbled above an alcohol burner.

As she did so a blaze fanned out.

"Look out, Miss Dwight," called Timothy, catching her wrist. "Your sleeve will catch."

"S-sh! You'll startle her!" whispered Gur and added, soothingly: "There, there, Barbara!"

"I beg your——" Timothy got no farther, but sat staring dumbly at the girl who, with a sigh, had let go of the kettle and swept out her arms in the gesture familiar in one awakening from sleep.

"O-oh," she sighed.

"There—there," soothed Gur. Then, as Barbara dropped her arms and relaxed her body, turned to Timothy with a frown. "See what you've done!"

"I beg your pardon, Miss Dwight. I didn't mean to be abrupt. I was afraid your sleeve would catch. It was just above the blaze."

The girl smiled at him. "I—I don't understand. I——" She paused, removed the cigarette from between her lips, stared at it with eyes that widened and then narrowed. "Oh!" she exclaimed and with a swift gesture dropped the burning butt into one of the saucers.

"Was I——" She hesitated, looked from one to another of her guests, bit her under lip, and seemed on the point of bursting into tears. "Was I smoking that thing?" Nobody answered and she went on, breathlessly: "I get so carried away with my work that I don't realize what I am doing. You—you shouldn't allow me to smoke, Durga. I hope you are not awfully shocked, Mrs. Fairchild."

"Of course I'm not, my dear child."

Barbara turned wistful eyes toward Timothy as if she wanted reassurance from him, too. But what she said was: "I am glad you remembered to come, Mr. Seward," adding, as she brushed back a straying lock of hair: "You were good to make the tea for me, Durga."

"I was only too glad to do it. I saw how tired you were. But I hope Mrs. Fairchild will overlook my very informal dress. I was through posing when Mr. Seward came. Barbara hadn't told me she was expecting visitors, and I had gone into my shop for a few minutes to telephone during the rest period she allows me once in a blue moon. When I came back company had come. It was five-fifteen and no signs of tea. So, instead of going back for my coat, I set to work. But now——"

Mrs. Fairchild shook her head.

"Your model's outfit is most becoming," she said. "May I roam around and look at things?"

She rose, cup in hand, and sauntered over to the image of Durga Gur.

"I know a good piece of work when I see it, Miss Dwight, even if I'm only an unpracticed amateur. This is quite wonderful. What do you call it?"

"Mars. It's the name Durga suggested."

"Mars? How strange. It seems

more like a study of spring or—youth. I always think of Mars as relentless, cruel——"

Durga Gur interrupted.

"And young. It's youth that is gay in the face of death. Yes, and relentless and ruthless and cruel, too. Prudent middle age may direct, but war itself is the game of the young man. Without him it could not be, and that's what our work——"

"Our work?" interjected Mrs. Fairchild, amusedly. "Are you collaborating in this?"

Gur flushed to his temples.

"No, certainly not. But we've talked it over and I'm interested because I've posed for it."

"He has done more than pose," interrupted Barbara, generously. "He has inspired me. He has taught me how to concentrate; to shut myself within myself and away from outside distractions while I am at work. At the end of the day when I stop and look at what I have done with hands that had always seemed so inefficient before, I cannot believe it. You really like it, Mrs. Fairchild?"

The girl was charmingly naïve and shy again. Poor Timothy felt his heart beginning to pound against his eardrums.

"It's remarkable," murmured Mrs. Fairchild.

"I am glad you like it. I have given so much for it."

Her breath caught. She turned suddenly away, held out groping hands and sat down on the edge of the chaise longue. And suddenly her cheeks were wet. She pressed her fingers against her eyelids as if to stop the tears. Sobs wrenched her.

"My dear child," cried Mrs. Fairchild, setting down her teacup and dropping on one knee beside the girl. "You are overwrought. You must rest." She turned a frowning face toward the two young men who stood looking helplessly on. "Get out of here, both of you. This is a woman's job."

Timothy picked up the new Panama and walking stick.

"Yes, please—go," murmured Barbara, brokenly. "I—I'm sorry. Good-by."

"Good-by," replied Timothy, trying to speak naturally. "Coming, Gur?"

Gur hesitated.

Mrs. Fairchild, who was arranging the cushions on the chaise longue, turned. "I shan't need you, Mr. Gur," she said shortly. She pressed Barbara gently back among the pillows.

"Shall I go, Barbara?" asked Gur, solicitously.

"Please!"

The man joined Timothy.

"I'll get my coat. We'll have tea at a little place I know," he said, as the door closed upon them. "I warned you not to startle her."

Crestfallen, Timothy did not try to defend himself, nor did he explain as he might have under ordinary circumstances, that afternoon tea was not a habit with him. Gur, in some way, seemed a link between him and Barbara Dwight. He resolved to stay with him as long as he could.

They had tea at a little restaurant in Fifty-seventh Street, and they were half through with it before Barbara Dwight was mentioned.

"She works too hard," said Timothy.

"I suppose you mean Miss Dwight," replied Gur.

"Yes."

"An artist must work too hard. It's the price of creation. Great conception without consequent exhaustion is an impossibility. God himself made the rule." He flicked an ash from the cigarette he was smoking, puffed rapidly, lighted another and went on thoughtfully. "The outsider sees the artist when he is reacting from the strain of conception. He thinks of him as a dawdler, an idler, who does not know the meaning of work. That is because the great artist has a dual personality—must have. To-day he is a foolish child—to-morrow, a blazing god. You smashed into Miss Dwight's inspired mood to-day and you've seen what happened. Yet I warned you. Lord, if the layman only realized what destruction he wreaks when he comes tramping in to take just a moment of time, and

then goes tramping out again, never suspecting that he has ground a divine spark under his ruthless feet—and that that particular spark can never be revived."

"But Miss Dwight had finished working——" Timothy began in self-defense.

"She was still in the inspired mood. You startled her out of it."

"Somebody had to do it."

"Why?"

"To bring her back to consciousness. Supposing she should get into one of these moods, as you call them, and never reawaken!"

"Never reawaken to the commonplace!" Durga Gur smiled indulgently. "Such a state should be devoutly prayed for!"

"It's like hypnosis," mumbled Timothy.

"It is hypnosis," returned Gur. "Every inspired artist must know how to hypnotize himself, to get rid of self-consciousness and to lean back on subconsciousness. Then he can soar. Poets speak of summoning their muses. They mean only that they know how to hypnotize themselves, leave their bodies, and lift themselves out of their actual surroundings and live in a world of their own creation. Only then do they write inspired things. When they cool off and read what they have written they wonder if it is their own—as Barbara, to-day, looked at her work and could hardly believe that she had done it. Then comes depression."

"And Miss Dwight hypnotizes herself?"

Gur hesitated. "Yes, and no. She was in despair when I met her. She knew what she wanted to do, but it eluded her. I took her in hand, cut the cords that bound her wings. This one piece of work that she is doing will make her famous. She suffers from a terrible exhaustion after each effort. But her accomplishment pays her for that."

He nodded emphatically. "I repay in full measure for all that I take, always," he said. But the words were addressed to himself rather than to Timothy.

For the moment he seemed to have forgotten his companion. His thoughts had leaped out and beyond his surroundings. And now that he was not smiling, Timothy saw that there were lines etched about his eyes and mouth. They gave to his expression a seriousness that was almost hard. And sad.

CHAPTER XVII.

CREEPING SHADOWS.

On the walk back to Washington Square Timothy had much to think about. What Gur had said of the dual personality of all artists oppressed him and suggested perplexing questions. For, if there was truth in what the man had told him, was it not possible that Barbara Dwight in one personality, had been in the gold room of the museum on Friday when the Finch jewels had been taken and, in her other personality, had forgotten it? Yet, if he admitted this possibility, must he not also admit that it might have been Barbara who had taken the Finch jewels and had afterward, when she discovered them in her possession, dropped the pasha's stone into his pocket?

Arrived at his apartment he rang the bell, and getting no answer unlocked the door and entered. Going to his room he discovered things in the topsy-turvy condition in which he had left them after trying the effect of the various new shirts and neckties. He had preened himself like a cockerel. He smiled at the recollection, for not even Mrs. Fairchild had noticed his bright feathers.

He hung up his hat, stood his walking stick in the corner, then, hearing no movement in the kitchen, went in search of Montgomery. But again he found things in a topsy-turvy confusion. Empty boxes, old neckties, and worn-out shirts were scattered over the floor and bed in Montgomery's room. But the dresser had been stripped of its furnishings. Nothing remained hanging in the closet. Montgomery had

departed, bag and baggage, and, as far as Timothy could discover, had left no word.

On the floor of the kitchen there was a railroad time-table folded back to a section giving the schedule for trains running between New York and Detroit.

"Detroit," mumbled Timothy. "Wonder if he's started for Detroit. It was Detroit that the woman on the phone spoke of last night."

Unconsciously, he started uptown again. Barbara Dwight was the loadstone that drew him.

Timothy dined at a hotel on Fifty-ninth Street, facing the park, and afterward strolled along the Avenue to Fifty-seventh, there turning west, and proceeding toward the Havelock studios.

It was perhaps nine o'clock when he found himself across the street from the Havelock studios. He stopped, swinging his new walking stick in an effort to appear nonchalant, looked up and down the street, went on a few steps, and stopped again. Proximity to the enchanted building set his heart to racing so madly that for a time he did not realize that on the other side of the street dark figures flitted silently, hugging the buildings, stopped, looked at him, moved on stealthily, paused, glanced back and then, as he walked on again, were swallowed up. One, two, three of them, had appeared and disappeared, when through Timothy's fog of feeling there penetrated a shaft of actuality.

One dark figure passed another. Then both stopped, turned back, engaged in low-toned talk, separated, and remained loitering in the shadows watching Timothy.

"Great guns!" he muttered. "I'm like a porch climber. Those fellows are watching me."

He straightened his shoulders and walked rapidly to the corner. Here he paused and glanced back in time to see both furtive loiterers, together now, turn into the service entrance of the Havelock Building.

They had not been watching him. They had been waiting to make sure that he was not watching them. The fact came home to Timothy with a piercing dread.

What did those creeping, stealthy creatures fear? Why should they hesitate, pass and repass the entrance to the Havelock Building, before entering it?

Timothy rounded the corner, walked up the street for half a block, turned back, swung into Fifty-seventh Street, and turned unhesitatingly into the first dark doorway that presented itself.

Hidden in the shadows he could watch, unseen, the entrance to the Havelock Building. But the last of the dark forms seemed to have been swallowed up. Men and women went by on both sides of the street, but there was nothing watchful or furtive in their manner. A single pedestrian entered the studio building. But his movements were frank.

Timothy was on the point of coming out of his hiding place when a man sauntered up and stopped directly in front of the doorway which concealed him. He wore a checked traveling cap and a long, light overcoat. That portion of his neck and face that were visible to Timothy were black as ebony. For fully a minute he remained motionless, then, with a hunch of the shoulders, he thrust his hands into the pockets of his loose coat and swaggered across the street into the Havelock Building.

And now Timothy recognized him. He was the model who had been in Durga Gur's studio on the previous day. And those others—had they, too, been black men? And was their destination Gur's studio? If so, why had they seemed so hesitant? What had they to fear?

A clammy terror that had in it a feeling of repulsion, gripped Timothy. He stepped from the doorway and started in the direction of Fifth Avenue. He wanted to get out of the neighborhood. He had gone but a few steps when he turned back again. Before going he must make sure that Barbara Dwight was not in the Havelock

Building. Catastrophe seemed to hover over the gloomy structure.

"Timothy—Timothy Seward. I—I have been trying to get you on the telephone for half an hour. O-oh!"

The hands that suddenly gripped Timothy's arm were like the clinging claws of a bird. For an instant he did not recognize the breathless voice of the veiled woman who appealed to him, and, with an abrupt movement, tried to jerk himself free.

"Oh, I'm so frightened. Don't you know me? It's Mrs. Fairchild."

"I didn't recognize you. I beg your pardon. Your veil—and that dark cloak which——"

"I'm so glad I have found you. I—I didn't know what to do. I phoned and phoned, and when you did not reply I got panic-stricken and came out here!"

They were walking on, now, her hands still clinging desperately to Timothy's arm.

"I dared not call the police. I felt that it would do no good, because the operator in the building"—she gasped like an exhausted runner—"the operator is *black*, too."

"What do you mean?" demanded Timothy.

"That he is probably a—a monster, too. Come!" She was still panting.

"Wait! You are out of breath. You must rest," remonstrated Timothy.

"No! No! There's no time to rest. Every moment is precious. Come! I'm not afraid any more—with you. I must telephone—— There's Donohue. He'll know what to do. He's not such a blunderer as most. There's a booth in the drug store on the corner. I used it to-day. But watch. I—I'm so frightened."

"I don't know what you are talking about, Mrs. Fairchild. If anything crooked is going on, why not report to the nearest officer——"

"Not yet. We must find out more. There must be no blundering. I'm all right now."

She released Timothy's arm and reaching up unfastened her veil.

"I'll go in here. You see, we shall need somebody who has authority to help us. But, before that, I want you to hear what I have been listening to for—oh, I don't know how long—five minutes—an hour—I don't know. And we must hurry."

Without further explanations she entered the corner drug store and shut herself into its telephone booth. Timothy stationed himself outside, wondering what had happened to upset the woman so terribly.

She came out presently and, although her skin was drawn looking, and so pale that the artificial color on her cheeks was like the daubs on a clown's face, she seemed to have regained her self-possession.

She dragged at his arm and he yielded, trying, as they walked, to find out what had frightened her. But she shook her head and whispered: "Not out here. I feel that the street is full of them. They would destroy us. And then—oh, we must make all haste. The whole city is tottering on the edge of destruction. But here we are." She dropped his arm.

"Laugh—laugh, please," she whispered. "Look gay. The boys at the door and in the elevator may be——"

She changed the subject so unexpectedly that it set dull Timothy's wits to spinning.

"It's a charming place, and I am so glad that you decided to come in and see it to-night," she said, turning into the building. Then, addressing the operator as she entered the elevator: "I'm having a little house-warming in my new studio. Bring anybody right up who calls for me, please."

"All right, ma'am. What floor?"

"Ninth."

The car stopped with a jerk and Mrs. Fairchild led the way down the hall and, stopping at a door in the same relative position as the one leading to Gur's apartment on the floor below, thrust a key into its lock, opened it and entered.

Timothy, following, found himself in a sparsely furnished but brightly lighted two-story room, a simulacrum, architecturally, of Gur's. But Mrs.

Fairchild gave him no chance to look around.

Without removing her hat, she hurried across the room and taking up a telephone receiver, fastened to a headpiece, adjusted it to her ears. Then beckoned Timothy.

"He is still at it. Listen!"

She removed the headpiece and passed it to Timothy. He adjusted it, expecting that he must wait until she had called a number, then discovered that there was somebody already on the wire, in the midst of what seemed to be a speech of some kind. Timothy recognized the voice. It was unquestionably that of Durga Gur—staccato, terribly earnest:

"You cannot stand and fight it out, man to man. You are but one to a hundred, but one to ten thousand, until your brothers, who still walk in darkness, can be brought into the light. But because you are one to ten thousand, the glory of your victory will be all the greater. And you will win a victory! That I promise you. One to ten thousand—think of that. You and I, my brothers, just a handful of us, will fight this great war here, on enemy ground, and will win it. And when you have won, you shall have your reward. No longer shall these monsters suck your blood and the blood of your children. You will no longer be outcasts, living in segregated communities. You will be free, respected citizens. More than that—you will be the great heroes about whom songs are sung. There will be marble images of you in the parks and public buildings. Children will decorate them with laurel wreaths, and men will stand before them with uncovered heads. You will have titles and honors and great wealth. For you will be the rulers of the country. In your drawing-rooms fountains will send up a perfumed spray. White servants will do your bidding. You and your wives and children will sit with the crowned heads of the new world which you will create. Black and white will mingle together, and your color will no longer be a stigma. It will be an honor—for you, just a little handful of black men, will have won the great war."

"How you reckon we goin' to do all dat, boss, when dey's onliest four or two dozen what's so far been persuaded over?" interrupted a soft, hesitating voice.

"Who's speaking, Colonel Showery?" It was Gur asked the question.

"Dat done be John Adams Harrison, a raw recruit what I's brought in dis evenin' for de first occasion. He's done seekin' some clearer understandin' of what duties you-all's goin' to impose on us for winnin' this heah war an' all dese high situations. I done tole him dat you didn't demand no shootin' or maneveurin's wid de bayonet." The new speaker interrupted himself with a nervous chuckle. "He's awful scairt of achievin' an overcoat of black tar mixed in wid a few feathers, he is."

"I des want to inquire how we's goin' to win dis war laik you say we is, boss, widout no bloodlettin' to speak about, an' no fightin' wid guns and powahful ammunitions. I's goin' to remove myself out of dis heah meetin' mighty presently if you-all's expectin' me to take part in dis heah war widout no army backin' up behind me. Dey's moah'n twenty millyum fightin' soldiers on opposite sides of us, boss. How's four, mebbe two dozen of us, evah goin' to set about destroyin' twenty——"

Durga Gur's voice broke in, gently wheedling:

"Let me make it clear, Brother Harrison. We intend to win the war by destroying the machinery of destruction. We will destroy the factories, the mills, the piers, the granaries, the great slaughterhouses. We will burn the wheat fields. We will ruin the weapons with which the war is being fought. We will starve out the armies who are prolonging this slaughter. Ours will be a bloodless victory, and it will bring riches and honors and glory to the black race."

"What you bringin' all dem riches and millyums to us for, instead of turnin' em into de hands of yoh own kin?" insisted the questioner. "Looks like dey's plenty of German gen'lemen

what's in powahful need of all dat money. What you gibbin' us dem powahful fine presents for, if you-all will kindly explain yohself, boss?"

"Because we Germans are under a cloud of suspicion. We can't get jobs in the factories or on the piers any more. We are segregated just as you are, with this difference—that we are not trusted, while they can still make use of you. They want your blood to pour into the trenches to save their own. You will be sent into the slaughter pits by the thousands, while your children, your wives, your mothers and helpless old folks will be left to starve and die like rats. You know what you are suffering from to-day—higher rents—lower wages—impossible living conditions—mob law—lynchings——"

There followed a murmur of approval. Then voices.

"Dat's so, boss."

"Dat's so, Mr. General Gur."

"We's standin' at attention."

"Thank you. And now to prove to you that my promises are not empty words, let me say that every man who leaves this place to-night, with his little black lunch box, to undertake the work that is assigned to him, goes with five hundred dollars in his pocket. This I give as a guarantee of good faith. When the work is done, you are to come back to me, one by one, to pose again for my composite statue of Triumph. And for your first sitting you will receive one thousand dollars."

There was the sound of subdued chuckling.

"Does that sound like a square deal?"

"It do, boss."

"It sure does."

"Thank you. And now this young lady will say something to you." Gur's voice sounded suddenly solemn, almost sepulchral. "I see that she is in the possession of the spirit."

"Hallelujah!"

"We are ready for any messages that our loved ones have to give, Miss Dwight."

Timothy turned horrified eyes to Mrs. Fairchild.

"Is Barbara Dwight in that hell?" he demanded. And then: "Do they know you're on the phone?"

Mrs. Fairchild shook her head. "You are listening to a dictaphone," she whispered. "We can hear them, but they cannot hear us." Her lips were white. Her eyes stared strangely. "I didn't know what was happening down there when I had it put in this morning, while Gur was at breakfast. I merely wanted to find out something about him." She pressed her breast as if to make breathing easier. "I had a suspicion—a certainty, almost—that he had something to do with your getting the diamond. He was with you just before you discovered it in your pocket, and he looked so funny—so startled—when I said you had thrown the lump of glass into the Sound. There was no reason for it, unless"—she gasped—"he knew what it was. But I didn't dream of this—this awfulness."

"Wait!" silenced Timothy. "Somebody else is talking. It's a woman. It's Barbara Dwight. No, it can't be. It's not her voice, yet——"

"It's Miss Dwight. I heard her. I think she's hypnotized."

"Good Lord! It must have been she last night who telephoned me. She says: 'Call Mr. Seward, 220 Gramercy. He'll help.'" Timothy pressed the receiver closer to his ear.

"Yes. I heard her repeating your name and telephone number a few moments ago."

Timothy pressed the receiver closer to his ear. Gur was speaking.

"You have a message for us, Miss Dwight?"

"Yes. 'Call——'"

"From whom is this message?" demanded Gur, in a purring guttural.

"Mam Liza wants to say something."

Timothy gulped a breath of relief. "There's another woman down there," he whispered. "Some one they call Mam Liza."

"No, there isn't. I heard Gur, early this evening, coaching Miss Dwight, making her repeat what she was to say to-night for this—this Mam Liza. She's dead, and Gur's making believe

that her spirit has come back to speak through Miss——"

"Yes, yes. Gur's asking now if anybody knows Mam Liza. And somebody is answering!"

Mrs. Fairchild leaned toward Timothy until she, too, could hear what the dictaphone reported.

"I knows Mam Liza, boss." The speaker was apparently the man whom Showery had called the new recruit. "Mam Liza was my ol' grandma." He laughed self-consciously. "She done passed on moh'n five years back. How d'y'd you-all know my ol' Mam Liza?"

"S-sh! She's here! With us! She wants to give you a message. Quiet in the room! Don't disturb her. All ready, Miss Dwight. Speak for Mam Liza!"

Timothy waited, breathless, spellbound with horror, wondering what was coming. For a moment there was silence. Then came a new voice, the feeble voice of a very old woman, soft and unmistakably Southern.

"You li'l' pickaninny, John Adams Harrison, you don' oughta min' yoh steps."

There followed a man's nervous giggle and then, in the voice of the new recruit: "Dat's Mam' Liza, sure nuff. I certainly nevah expected to hear her voice no moah——"

"S-sh! She has a message for you, Mr. Harrison," cautioned Gur's voice.

"Telephone Mr. Seward, 2——" began that voice so like and yet so unlike Barbara Dwight's.

But Gur interrupted gently. "You are getting away from your control, Miss Dwight. Mam Liza has a message for her grandson. What is it, Mam Liza?"

Again came the feeble voice of the old woman:

"You li'l' pickaninny, John Adams Harrison, dey's opportunity a-standin' in yoh pathway. Yoh ol' Mam Liza is done come back with advisin's to you to cotch him quick foh he passes 'long. Dey's automobiles waitin'——" The voice grew fainter.

"It's what Gur told her to say," murmured Mrs. Fairchild.

"Yes, Mam Liza, I's attendin', I is," now came in the awed voice of the new recruit.

"Automobiles——"

Timothy ripped off the headpiece of the dictaphone and got to his feet.

"There's something horrible going on down there. Something I don't understand. I'm going down."

He flung toward the door, but Mrs. Fairchild caught his arm.

"Wait! Donohue is coming with—help. I've sent for him. He said in fifteen minutes! He'll be here——"

"Good Lord, Mrs. Fairchild, what have you done? Barbara Dwight's down there." Timothy's recollection had flashed back to what he had suffered at the hands of the detective. He must save Barbara Dwight from a like indignity—from worse. "We must get her out of that mess before Donohue gets here."

"Oh—oh, of course," murmured Mrs. Fairchild, still clinging to his arm. "But we can't go down into that horror. They'd destroy us. Life means nothing to that monster. Oh—— If you had heard what I did, you'd know. The black lunch boxes! That's what he called them—and then I ran out and found you. I understood."

Timothy released the clinging fingers.

"So do I," he murmured hoarsely. "And it's all the more reason why I must go for Barbara Dwight."

He was at the door.

"Wait! Let me think. There's a password. They'd not let you in without it. I heard them give it—over and over. That's what first frightened me. It's 'The dark horse,' and you tap three times. But don't go."

But Timothy had jerked open the door.

"I must get her out of it, I tell you. They—they are looking for her already—advertising! Donohue must not see her." He flung off her trembling hands, and without stopping to call the elevator ran down the stairs, rushed along the corridor and stopped at Gur's door.

Then, without pausing to think of the danger he was plunging into, raised his

hand and tapped lightly three times. The door opened a crack.

"The dark horse," whispered Timothy.

The crack widened and he was in Gur's studio.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TIMOTHY IN THE THICK OF THINGS.

At one end of the room, in a nimbus of soft light, stood Barbara Dwight. The rest of the studio was dark. Save for the sound of breathing, it was absolutely quiet. Timothy slipped into the room cautiously. Nobody challenged his entrance. Indeed, nobody but the doorkeeper seemed to realize that a newcomer had been admitted. He felt, without being able to see, that the attention of that evil gathering was focused on Barbara Dwight.

She seemed to have just risen from a thronelike chair that stood behind her. Her arms were raised as if she were in the act of delivering a benediction. Her eyes, although wide open, seemed unseeing, like those of one who walks in her sleep. And her face was whiter than the strange white robe in which she was draped.

"God is with you, my brothers."

The words were hardly more than a sigh, then her knees bent beneath her, her arms dropped. She would have sunk to the floor had not Gur, stepping into the spotlight, caught her and guided her with utmost tenderness to the great chair behind her.

This accomplished, with a heave of his shoulders, he turned and looked into the darkened room. His face was radiant, his eyes burning. An electric power seemed to stream from him.

"You have heard. You must believe. Your work is blessed. Not I, but the great Father of us all, has assigned you to it. Through Miss Dwight, His messenger has spoken. Do not betray Him. It is you He has chosen to lead the world out of Galilee. Your places have been assigned. You are to take the black boxes, which I have ready, and deliver them in accordance with the directions which you have received. Now, let every man raise his right hand and swear——"

"Hold on!" Timothy Seward's great, hulking figure stepped suddenly into the lighted zone. "Don't make that pledge! You are Americans. You stand with your own people—not with this German monster who would employ you to do the work he dares not do himself. Who uses innocence"—Timothy moved his hand toward the limp figure of Barbara Dwight—"to further his fiend's purpose."

"Seize him," shouted Gur, and himself lunged toward Timothy, whose arm swinging round like a great sledge, brushed him back as if he were an annoying insect.

There followed the shuffling of feet, and now Timothy could make out in the dusk, dark faces turned toward him. The air seemed surcharged with defiance, fear, anger.

This was no time for him to attempt to rescue Barbara Dwight. He was one, against how many he could not guess.

And now between him and the door there was a movement, the low murmur of a voice giving directions.

"Doorkeeper, turn on the lights." Timothy boomed out the command.

There was a clicking sound and the current was on. It revealed Gur in front of, and very close to his clay image of "Triumph."

"Guard the door!" shouted Timothy.

His bulk, his dominant voice, his blazing eyes, cowed his listeners and gave him authority.

"Don't let that reptile escape! Montgomery Williams!" Timothy had discovered his house man cowering behind a cabinet. "Guard the door!"

"Yes, sir!" came back tremulously, and Montgomery sidled out of his hiding place. "I'm guardin' it, sir."

The name of Edmonia's husband flashed into Timothy's mind.

"And you, Ezra Showery ——"

But before he could finish, Gur dashed toward the bathroom, threw open its door and disappeared.

"After him, Showery!"

It needed no second command. Like

children caught in mischief and hoping to escape punishment by prompt obedience, three black figures leaped after Gur and dragged him back.

For the moment Timothy was master of the situation and he felt it. Yet he knew instinctively that, at his first attempt to arouse Barbara Dwight, or to carry her from the room, the tide would turn against him. He must face these men as a tamer faces his beasts, if he would cow them.

The gleam of teeth and the restless rolling of eyes warned him to go slowly. Gur's attempt to escape had given him a temporary weapon. He must use it cautiously.

"You've seen how your self-appointed leader would have left you in the lurch to save his own hide——" he began.

"Drop the spiteful tone, Seward, and straighten my necktie. Both my arms are engaged."

Durga Gur, rumpled and helpless in the grip of Ezra Showery and a powerful young mulatto, smiled up at Timothy.

Then, as Timothy made no move, remarked, lightly:

"If I were you, Colonel Showery, and you, John Adams Harrison, I'd change my tactics. You're holding the wrong man, and tossing the opportunity to better yourselves rather carelessly out of the window. Don't you want those five-hundred-dollar retaining——"

Timothy interrupted. He was no orator, but he was fired with terrible earnestness.

"Hear me, men," he pleaded, "I have no wish to harm you. I would only open your eyes to what this fiend has asked you to do. I stood back there in the shadows and listened to him while he argued with you that the way to stop the war was to destroy the instruments with which our boys, your color and mine, are trying to win it. He lied. Nothing can stop this war until it is won, even if you blow every factory and every pier and every ship in America into kingdom come. We will build new ones, and new ones again. But, in the meantime, are we going to leave our men to be murdered over there in the trenches, with nothing but bare hands with which to defend themselves? There are black boys in khaki over there, just as there are white boys, and they are depending on the folks in America to back them up with food, and guns, and aëroplanes and ambulances in the sacrifice they are making. Are you going to betray them for five hundred dollars and some promises that can never be kept?"

"No, sir, Mr. Seward, I isn't," came in the voice of Timothy's former house man. "I's goin' to back 'em up, back 'em right up, I is. I's goin' to stay right here in New York an' back 'em up. He ain't goin' to git me to make no journey out to Detroit, Michigan. No, sir, Mr. Seward."

There was a mutter of approval from the corner of the room.

And, then, suddenly, without warning came a peremptory pounding on the door panels.

"He's betrayed you to the police," cried Gur, and tried to wrench himself free.

"Don't let him get away," shouted Timothy, but already Ezra Showery had released his hold on Gur's arm and sought cover behind a curtain.

The young mulatto, his eyes rolling, hung onto the other arm grimly.

"No harm shall come to you, men," shouted Timothy. "It's Gur they're after. Open the door, Montgomery."

Montgomery, accustomed to obedience, unlocked the door. As he did so Gur's free hand swept back, ran along the upper edge of the great carved chest, stopped.

The door opened.

"I am honored, gentlemen," called Gur, genially, and then as Detective Donohue stepped into the room, added in a ringing voice: "Look out for the snake!"

At the same instant the front of the chest dropped forward.

Panic followed. Nobody stopped to think or to argue. There was a concerted dash for safety, a rush to get out of the studio, and away from the danger it harbored. Like an avalanche the black men hurled themselves into

the very arms of the half dozen officers who blocked the doorway. For, as Gur spoke, every eye had turned to him, and had seen the noisome thing which the swung-down front of the chest revealed. But saw it for the flash of an eye only. There was a darting head, and what looked like a twisting, shining cable slipped from the chest and slid over the rug.

Timothy Seward alone, out of all that crowd, kept his senses. As if he had divined what Gur was about to do, he grabbed the middle of the Indian rug that covered the floor, lifted it, and, reaching out, seized Barbara Dwight, chair and all, and set her down in the bare and shining floor space which his act uncovered.

At the same moment, the great clay image which had stood on its sheet at one end of the rug, toppled, half righted itself, toppled again and went over with a thud, the wet clay crumbling from its wooden framework. And, as it struck the floor, from somewhere inside of it there was disgorged a small, black hand bag.

Gur, left in the room with Timothy, the unconscious girl, and that slippery thing which had been deprived of its means of locomotion when it had been shaken out of the rug onto the bare floor, taking advantage of the blockade in the doorway, now sprang past Timothy, bent, picked up the black bag and again dashed for the bathroom.

Timothy let him go. This was no time to leave Barbara Dwight, whose limbs stirred like those of a waking child, and whose head sagged helplessly on the frail stem of her neck. The police were on the threshold. It was up to them to see that Gur did not escape.

He looked at the snake, shoved Barbara's chair well out of harm's way and, without taking his eye from the reptile, leaned over and reached for a great iron trident that stood beside the fireplace.

"Let me do for the damned thing, Seward."

Timothy started, faced round and confronted Gur. He had come back into the studio, and was standing beside Barbara Dwight's chair. In one hand he still held the black bag. He carried the other behind him.

Timothy reached out and seized the half-hidden arm. It came around limply. Its hand swung loose.

"My gun's in my hip pocket, Seward. Cover me with it, if you see fit, but give me the satisfaction of doing for that reptile. After that your pleasure is mine."

He was breathing easily, smiling and nonchalant as ever.

Timothy hesitated, then pulled out Gur's gun, broke it and found it loaded. In spite of the man's yielding he did not trust him. He felt that he was capable of any deviltry.

"Thank you. And look out for my bag, please." Gur glanced toward the hall where the police were dealing brutally with the black men, dropped the bag to the floor, then seized the trident. With a swift swing, he brought it down on the snake's head. Again and again he struck the loathsome, clinging creature, while Timothy, alert but trembling, stood between it and Barbara Dwight, with Gur's gun cocked.

And now from outside, in the hall, came the piping, unforgettable voice of Detective Donohue.

"Take 'em over and lock 'em up, but first send up a couple of the boys to help Murphy and I round up any more there may be lurkin' round. Come on, Charley."

Gur stopped flailing the serpent for a moment.

"Yes. Come in! The latch is up."

Then, as Donohue stepped lightly into the room, his blunt-nosed automatic ready for use, Gur raised the trident again and brought it down. The next moment it fell to the floor with a clatter.

"That finishes him," he remarked, as casually as if referring to the disposition of an annoying insect and then, turning to Donohue and Murphy: "You were not expected, gentlemen, but you are welcome."

The detectives, meantime, had recognized Timothy.

"You in on this, too?" exclaimed Donohue, covering him with his gun.

"Let Mr. Seward alone," laughed Gur. "I'm the man you're after. And I'll go with you without a word as soon as I've wound up a few little affairs here."

He drew closer to Barbara Dwight and passed one hand over her face.

"Wake up, Barbara," he urged, gently insistent. "Wake up."

"What's the matter with the girl? Fainted?" piped Donohue.

Gur ignored the question. "Barbara, it's time to knock off. Wake up!"

This time the girl sighed, threw out her arms, stretched her body and winked dazedly. "Call Mr. Seward, 22——" She stopped, seemed to suddenly discover Timothy, gave him a smile as tender as it was fleeting and, closing her eyes again, seemed once more on the point of relapsing into unconsciousness.

Gur shook her shoulder.

"Don't go to sleep again, Barbara. Wake up."

She covered a yawn with her fingers.

"You are so officious, Durga," she murmured, smiling, then sat up, ran her hands over the white robe she wore and looked from Gur to Timothy. "Where'd I get this ridiculous thing?" she asked, picking up a fold of it. Before Gur could answer she went on: "It's night, Durga. Have I been working up to now? And—and I'm in your studio. I don't like to lose track of myself like this." She seemed on the verge of tears. "O-oh, I—I am so tired. Will you get a taxi, Mr. Seward, and——"

Timothy took a step toward the telephone.

"You stay right here, Mr. Seward." Donohue laid a restraining hand on his arm. "You gotta——"

Gur's voice interrupted. "Good evening, Mrs. Fairchild, will you come in?" he called genially. "I knew you were in the neighborhood." Then, as Mrs. Fairchild who, for a minute or two had been standing just inside the doorway, entered, hesitatingly, he added: "I have something to say to you and to our good friend, Mr. Timothy Seward."

"This the man you wanted us to get?" demanded Donohue, addressing Mrs. Fairchild and indicating Gur.

"Yes, he's the one," whispered Mrs. Fairchild from behind a little gold thing containing smelling salts. "Mr. Seward's all right. He's on our side."

"Sit down, Mrs. Fairchild. You're out of breath." Gur clicked his heels. The ends of his crisp little mustache turned up merrily.

"You quit kiddin' an' come along," piped Donohue.

Gur's eyes wrinkled whimsically. "I have the honor of addressing——?"

"I'm Donohue, of Donohue & Co., detectives."

"Delighted, Donohue. I'll go with you, presently, but first I have something to say to Mrs. Fairchild and Mr. Seward, and to you, Barbara. And I would suggest, Mr. Donohue, that one of you fellows close the door. We don't want a rabble looking on."

"Lock the door, Charley," snapped Donohue and, as his associate complied, again addressed Gur: "What you got up your sleeve—a get-away?"

Gur smiled and shook his head. His manner was disarmingly affable.

"I had a chance to make a get-away by means of the fire escape. But I came back. It would have been a shame to have missed you."

"What you hidin' behind your back?"

"My hand." Again Gur's arm and empty hand came around, only to swing out of sight again instantly. "Mr. Seward has my gun." He turned to Timothy. "Will you be good enough to open my bag, Seward?"?

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE BLACK BAG.

Timothy reached down and picked up the black bag, frowned down at the lock, hesitated, held it toward Donohue.

"I'm not sure that we ought to open the thing here," he began, when Gur seized the bag, rested it on the arm of Barbara Dwight's chair and, with his

left hand still behind his back, opened it dexterously with his right.

"That stuff that you're afraid of, Seward, is all in the closet over there." He jerked his head toward a draped doorway. "In little black boxes. You can look for it after I'm gone."

"Oh—oh—oh," cried Barbara Dwight. "What is that behind you, Durga?"

"A dead snake," answered Gur, and, without looking, kicked the slimy body into the lifeless ashes on the hearth.

The girl drew up her feet, cowering as she did so into the corner of the big chair.

"How did it get in here?"

Nobody but Timothy heard the question, and he did not reply, for Gur had taken from the bag a packet of what looked like money, and was holding it toward Mrs. Fairchild.

"It's part of your fifty thousand dollars. You'll find the rest, or most of it, in the bag. It will be of no further use to me. Help yourself."

He stepped back, leaned against the mantel, the hand with the packet of money dangling beside him, the other tucked behind his back.

Mrs. Fairchild bent over the bag. "Oh!" she exclaimed. "It's full of money."

"Yours," repeated Gur, and cleared his throat, impatiently.

"How did you get it?"

"From Seward."

"That's a lie," cried Timothy, squaring his chin.

"Not—not so vehement, please, Mr. Seward. You drew it from the bank and gave it to me in return for—the Egyptian diamond. It was a fair exchange."

"What is the matter with everybody?" exclaimed Barbara Dwight.

"The Egyptian diamond! How'd you come by that?" cried Donohue, excitedly, thrusting his face close to Gur's.

Gur did not recoil, although his skin looked suddenly livid, and bluish swellings had appeared beneath his eyes.

"Don't annoy me, Donohue," he said, waving the man back. "I've a lot to explain and there—there's only a short time."

"You'll explain it at the police station, not here!"

"I'll explain it to my friends, Mr. Donohue, and as I see fit. Mrs. Fairchild, will you look over the contents of the bag?"

His manner was one of jaunty nonchalance. He apparently felt no concern as to the consequences of his incriminating admissions.

Mrs. Fairchild, astonished out of her nervousness, swept up the bag and, sitting down on the framework of Gur's overturned statue of "Triumph," emptied its contents into her lap.

"It's my money, Timothy!" she cried.

But Timothy did not hear her. For, beside the packets of bills in her lap, there was a beaded blue reticule. He stared at it with horrified eyes.

It was the gayly decorated bag that the girl in the museum, who looked like Barbara Dwight, had carried when she so unconcernedly passed the cobra on the day that the Finch collection of jewels had been taken.

"I'm so glad you have found your ——" began Barbara Dwight, then interrupted herself with a startled exclamation. "Why, that's my bag—that I lost. My keys were in it!"

"Open it, Mrs. Fairchild. You'll not find Miss Dwight's keys—they are in my pocket—but its contents may interest you," said Gur.

Mrs. Fairchild, without waiting for permission from Barbara, pulled out the gathered top of the reticule. Then cried out:

"What—what are these?"

Gur inclined his body, then jerked himself erect again.

"The Finch jewels, of course!" he replied.

"How'd you get them?" demanded Mrs. Fairchild, forestalling Donohue.

"Miss Dwight gave them to me."

And now it was Barbara's turn to make indignant remonstrance.

"That's untrue, Durga. What do you mean?"

"That you have been helping me, Barbara, even more than I have been

helping you. Together we could have put the thing over. But your mind got distracted. After that, things went wrong. I should have known better than to have staked so much on a woman." He sighed and leaned heavily against the mantel.

"What do you mean, Durga?"

"That you lost your power of complete concentration. You permitted the thought of Seward to get control——"

"Quit this," insisted Donohue. "And get down to cases. How'd you get that jewelry?"

"For your benefit, Mr. Donohue, I will repeat. Miss Dwight went to the museum for me and, with a little steel mallet, smashed the case in which the collection was being displayed, removed the jewels and delivered them to me. It was a very neat job."

Donohue shook his finger toward Barbara Dwight. "Is that the young woman in blue that was hangin' round the gold room that day the jewels disappeared?" he snarled, turning his attention to Timothy.

"Oh, Mrs. Fairchild, what are they talking about? Has everybody gone mad?"

Before Mrs. Fairchild could respond, Gur interposed.

"Don't get distressed, Barbara. It is all very simple. You wanted to create something great in marble. But to create, one must be able to lose oneself, hypnotize oneself, as it were. You were unable to do it—your conscious mind was always interfering with the subconscious. So you yielded yourself to me—allowed me to separate you from your self-consciousness. And when in this state you were my instrument. Not only did you model wonderfully in clay, in accordance with my guidance, but you acted for me, as I would act. You spoke as I would speak, even said 'damn' as I say it and smoked just as I do." He laughed harshly. "You became my hands and my mouthpiece. I could remain in my studio while you went here and there doing my bidding."

"Oh, Durga, how could you make me do these horrid things. Smoke and—I will not believe it. I could not have taken those jewels as you say I did."

"Believe what you will, Barbara. We have the jewels, and Mr. Seward remembers seeing you at the museum just before——"

Barbara Dwight pressed her fingers against her eyes.

"And I trusted you. Thought you my best friend. Now I ——"

"We sacrifice our friends on the altars of great causes," interrupted Gur, gently.

"I loathe you." She shrank into the depths of the great chair. "It was—dastardly to make me *steal.*" One hand reached out and sought Timothy's.

Gur saw it and moved his shoulders contemptuously. Either the shadows on his face, or some atmospheric condition in the room, made his smile ridiculous, the segment of a small circle that lost itself in strangely puffed-out cheeks.

"What's the use of so much talk that don't get us——" A loud knocking interrupted Donohue. "Open the door, Murphy. It's probably the boys I told 'em to send up."

"It's that kind of thing, Mrs. Fairchild," said Gur, speaking thickly, as if his tongue filled his mouth, and indicating the two young people with a scornful gesture, "that makes a woman useless in the big games. Miss Dwight was my right hand in the carrying out of one of the greatest schemes ever conceived——"

"You are modest, Mr. Gur," murmured Mrs. Fairchild.

"Until she ran into a brainless young lubber with a good physique," went on Gur, ignoring the interruption. "She is no longer single-minded. His name, his telephone number are always in the forefront of her thoughts. Her conscious impression of him overlaps into her subconsciousness." He fixed his eyes on the door where Detective Murphy was holding a murmured argument with somebody. Then went on. "I think I have her in control when his image interjects itself and she wants to telephone to him."

"It was you, then, who called me,"

murmured Timothy stroking the back of the girl's hand.

"And, on the other hand the impressions that she receives in the hypnotic state carry over into the conscious state."

"As in the case of the explosion at Newport News," cried Mrs. Fairchild. "Are you a man or a fiend?"

"I am a patriot," returned Gur thickly. Then looked again at the door.

"Come in, Salah," he called.

With his back still resting against the mantel and his left hand concealed behind him, he now extended his right, palm up, toward a disheveled and breathless individual who, with guttural exclamations, tore himself free from Detective Murphy, rushed up and, seizing Gur's extended hand, kissed it extravagantly.

Timothy recognized the new arrival. He was the down-at-the-heel snake charmer whom he had seen earlier in the day behind the desk of the employment office.

"Forgive me," the man cried. "They would not let me come in before! I warned them of the danger! But they held me back! I ran all of the way. Where is Naja?"

"I did for him," snarled Gur. "He's there in the ashes."

The newcomer looked in the fireplace, then dropped to his knees and, lifting the serpent's body, fondled it.

"Poor Naja!" he crooned. "How did he escape?"

"I let him out."

"You—you let him out after I had warned you?"

"To protect myself. To give me time to save myself."

"And now you have destroyed him! I—I shall be unable to get another."

He looked wildly from one to another of the astonished faces turned toward him.

Gur rested his hand on the man's shoulder. "Who sent you, Salah?"

"One of the black men who—who escaped. He came to the office. He said you had betrayed them to the police and had then let a snake loose among them. I did not wait—although I could not believe it. And you, master, are safe?"

He dropped the snake, reached up and would have again seized Gur's hand. But Gur thrust him back.

"Let me present my accomplished assistant, Mr. Salah Jung," he said, with an impatient clearing of his throat. "The serpent of which I have just disposed, was his property and, had he arrived a few minutes earlier, he would doubtless have given you an entertaining exhibition in the art of snake charming. It is his profession, but, unfortunately, he has been unable to follow it since coming to New York, and has been obliged to adopt a less exciting but more useful occupation—that of conducting an employment bureau for the benefit of dissatisfied American negroes."

Gur clicked his heels, swayed forward, righted himself and stood leaning heavily against the mantelpiece.

"You are ill, master!" exclaimed Salah Jung.

"Only tired, Salah. Bring me a chair. I have much to say."

He was breathing hoarsely, his attempted smile was again grotesquely contorted by the strange puffiness of his cheeks. His nose looked suddenly small and pinched. His eyes seemed mere slits beneath fat, overhanging brows.

"You're ill," exclaimed Mrs. Fairchild, and, making a bag of her skirt, sprang to her feet. "We must do something—telephone for an ambulance."

"You, Murphy! Send for one," piped Donohue, while Timothy steadied Gur onto the couch which Salah Jung pushed up.

"And cover me, Salah. It's cold here."

The man picked up a rug and spread it over Gur.

"And now give me a chance. I've something to say to Seward. You haven't recognized me yet, have you?"

"I have not," mumbled Timothy, won into more sympathetic humor by Gur's weakness.

Gur raised himself on his right el-

bow. "I'm Captain Hugo von Schallern of——"

"You are Captain von Schallern, the fellow I——"

"The dirty, unshaved little cuss you got through the lung the day you took our pillbox." Gur stopped, gasping for breath, then went on. "I recognized you at once. But I owe you something. One doesn't forget when one has a debt to pay."

Through the slits that his eyes had become he glanced at Mrs. Fairchild who had slipped an arm about the waist of Barbara Dwight.

"He almost did for me, and after he finished, he dragged me—Lord knows how, with one foot badly smashed by one of our shells—dragged me, carried me, somehow got me to an ambulance."

"I remember," muttered Timothy. "I never saw you again. I asked about you. They said you'd been exchanged."

"Yes. But I was never any good—afterward. They sent me over here. It was the only place where I could help. And I had an idea—a great idea. And I'd have put it through if it hadn't been for my sense of humor. You'd given me back my life after you'd made it worthless." His voice was hoarse. The words came in painful gasps. "So I gave you the Egyptian stone after taking your fifty thousand. I—I knew it would be worthless to you—would get you into trouble if you ever tried to get rid of it. But it was as fair a return as you had made to me."

His mustache quivered in his attempt to smile. But his muscles seemed atrophied. His head hung forward. His chin rested on his chest. But he still supported himself on his elbow.

"Don't try to tell us—don't torture yourself," pleaded Mrs. Fairchild.

"Master, where is the hurt——?" began Salah Jung.

But Gur interrupted, petulantly.

"There's whisky in the cabinet. That'll help."

Almost before he had finished, the man had found the flask and emptied half its contents into a tumbler. Gur gulped down the liquid as if it had been water.

"The rest of it!" he said, the corners of his mouth losing themselves in the puffy hills of his cheeks. "There. That's better." He sank back upon the couch. When he spoke again, his voice, in spite of its hoarseness, had an undertone of amusement. Even Donohue was impressed with the man's gameness.

"As Seward has just told you," he said, "I was exchanged. But I was no good for active service. But I wanted to help, and I had an idea of how I could do it. So I went to headquarters. America had not yet come openly into the war. But she had taken sides. We knew she would come in unless we could keep her too busy at home by—by stirring up civil trouble, inflaming her colored population, starting riots." He swallowed with difficulty. "But we didn't know your damned niggers. You treat them like dogs, and like dogs they whine and lick your hands."

"Some people call that trait loyalty, Gur," rumbled Timothy.

The man went on as if he had not heard. "There's only one way to get them—through their superstitions and imaginations. I found it out too late. You were already in the war, and my money was gone. They couldn't send me any more, or wouldn't. They haven't much use over there for the fellows who fail." He paused, panting. "But I didn't quit. I decided to let you Americans pay for the carrying out of the plan. The Finch jewels were on display. They were going to be sold for the benefit of the allied cause. I made up my mind that they should help. I'd get them—use them on our side. The idea amused me. They were too well guarded for an ordinary break.

"But at last an idea came to me. I had been working through Salah's employment agency. He got track of discontented blacks and sent them to me. When they were of the right sort to be used I saw to it that they were placed where they would do the most good. Salah had a couple of cobras. He agreed to carry one to the museum

and turn it loose just outside the gold gallery where the jewels were on display. During the confusion I would break the case containing the jewels and escape. Then I decided that I was too valuable a tool to be risked in such an undertaking. If they apprehended me, our cause would be lost. So I made use of Miss Dwight. I had found her susceptible to a trick I had learned in India. She had submitted herself to it again and again. I could put her into a state of trance and keep her in it for hours. In this condition she had been of the greatest value to me in my work with your black men. Through her I could play upon their superstitions. I would find out the family history of every recruit that Salah sent to me. Miss Dwight," he laughed hoarsely, "Miss Dwight delivered messages to them from dead relatives."

Mrs. Fairchild who had been leaning forward jerked herself back as if to remove herself as far as possible from the man. Timothy growled under his breath and laid his hand on Barbara Dwight's shoulder, protectingly. Donohue licked his lips as if he tasted a delicious morsel.

"I decided that Barbara should get the jewels. If she was caught with the goods it would in no way involve me. My plans worked perfectly. Salah twisted the cobra about his body, under his overcoat, carried it to the museum and, when the time was ripe and the museum almost empty, slipped it to the floor behind a woman. When she discovered it, she shrieked as we had planned she would, and the thing was done. Barbara, following the directions I had given her, smashed the case with her mallet, removed the jewels and walked calmly away. Then my sense of humor interfered. You, Seward, had boasted to Salah of the fifty thousand dollars that had been deposited in your name as surety payment on the Egyptian stone and had also confided to him your tendency to lose track of yourself. Not to have hypnotized you, when I owed you so much, would have been a crime." The sound in Gur's throat was, perhaps, an inarticulate chuckle. "Putting you into the trance state was almost too easy. To make it all simpler—your mind was already set on getting the Egyptian diamond. At my bidding you took the little black bag from under the stairs in the hall at Irwin's, where I had left it, went to the bank, drew the money, replaced the bag and returned to your office. Our conversation was resumed at the point where we had left it off when you entered the trance state. I had already fixed Barbara's clock. She thought I came for her to go to Larchmont fifteen minutes before I did and ——" He coughed. His head sank back upon the couch. "What was I saying? Oh, yes—Barbara—I lost control. You—you were sentimental over the—the great lubber. But we accomplished something. The business at Newport News—ship full of munitions and——"

"Oh—you—you!" whispered Barbara. "I thought it was a premonition that came to me in a dream. Oh, Durga——"

"It—it was an impression that you carried—carried over—from the—the trance state. You heard us planning and—remembered it—vaguely. You were——"

Suddenly he sat up. The thrown-back rug displayed the hand he had so carefully concealed. It was like a boxing glove, puffed, shining, bluish. He tore at his collar—suffocating, tormented for breath.

"Master! It struck you. Let me suck the poison."

The snake charmer flung himself upon his knees before the couch and, lifting the distorted hand, looked wildly for the wound.

"Yes," gasped Gur, hoarsely. "When I let down the front of the chest—it—it bit me. The damned reptile!"

Barbara Dwight cried out and covered her eyes. Mrs. Fairchild turned away, sickened at what she had seen.

"Cover me. Don't let them see," whispered Gur. "Cover me, Salah." He fell back upon the couch, muttering with choked incoherence, his right hand

clutching at his throat. Then, suddenly, his voice became hoarsely articulate. "Love—marriage—dreams. *Ach, Gott*—failure. Cover—don't let them see—I'm—— Oh, there it is—the mirage. It—it's a juggernaut. Failure—cover me—Salah!"

Mrs. Fairchild released herself from Barbara's clinging arms, and going to Gur drew the rug gently up over his body.

The man made an effort to speak again. "A laughing mask——"

The words died in a guttural sound.

Timothy touched Mrs. Fairchild's arm. "This is no place for you—or Barbara," he said. Then remembered Donohue. "If you will permit it, Mr. Donohue, I will take Miss Dwight and Mrs. Fairchild home."

Donohue hesitated, picked up the bag of jewels which Mrs. Fairchild had put down when she went to Gur, looked into it, frowned and shook his head.

Mrs. Fairchild tapped his arm with her lorgnette.

"You may hold me responsible for the good behavior of these two young people," she urged. "And to-morrow I will complete the collection of jewels by turning over to you the Egyptian diamond."

Donohue still hesitated. "I do not intend to claim the reward that has been offered for the gems, Mr. Donohue, so I feel that I am entitled to some consideration——" Mrs. Fairchild paused, looking up at Donohue expectantly.

"Certainly, Mrs. Fairchild." Donohue smiled deprecatingly. "Murphy, call a taxi and have one of the men go along with Mr. Seward and the ladies."

"Whenever you need me you'll find me at the address I gave you the other day," rumbled Timothy.

"And may I go, too?" demanded Salah Jung.

"You stay where you are until I c'n take you round to the police station where the rest of your party's waitin'," piped Donohue, gripping the man's wrist so roughly that he cried out.

In the elevator nobody spoke but, as Timothy put the two women into the taxicab and then crowded into the let-down seat opposite, Barbara Dwight again became aware of the strange robe she was wearing.

"Who put this on me?" she asked. "Whose is it?"

"I don't know whose it is but you wore it when you—you talked for Mam Liza," explained Mrs. Fairchild. "I suppose Mr. Gur asked you to——"

"I talked for Mam Liza? Who's Mam Liza?"

"She was the grandmother of one of the black men who were tools of Durga Gur."

For a moment there was silence. Then Barbara leaned toward Timothy.

"Will Durga die?"

Timothy swallowed. "Yes." His voice was strangely rough.

"I—I suppose I'm foolish, but I'm awfully sorry." The girl choked on the concluding words.

"He himself said that the individual must be sacrified for the cause. We should all feel grateful that it was the right individual who was sacrificed for the right cause," said Mrs. Fairchild, speaking crisply, and working with nervous fingers at the top of the gold thing that held smelling salts.

She held it to her nose, impatiently crowded back into the corner of the seat.

Timothy had taken one of Barbara Dwight's hands between his palms and was smoothing it awkwardly, while the girl's eyes, dry now, and radiant in the dusk of the cab, were fixed adoringly upon his face.

These two needed no comforting. They seemed to have entirely forgotten the horror of the events they were leaving behind them. Mrs. Fairchild shivered and drew the rug over her knees. Then, sure that neither of the young people would pay the slightest attention, did what she had felt like doing for the past five minutes.

But she ought to have had a man-sized handkerchief for the emergency.

THE END.

The Dog-Star Pup

By H. H. Knibbs

ON the silver edge of a vacant star near the trembling Pleiades,
A hobo, lately arrived from earth, sat rubbing his rusty chin,
All unaware as he squatted there with his elbows on his knees,
That an angel stood at the Golden Gate impatient to let him in.

The hobo, peering across the space on a million worlds below,
Started up as he heard a voice: "Mortal, why wait ye there?"
He scratched his head as he turned and said: "I reckon I got to go,
And mebby the goin' is just as good in heaven as anywhere."

A little while and the hobo stood at the thrice-barred Golden Gate.
"Enter!" the smiling angel cried. "You came to a worthy end!
Though the sad arrears of your wasted years occasioned a brisk debate,
You gave your life in a noble cause—you perished to save a friend!"

"Only me dog," and the hobo smiled. But the startled angel frowned
At that rack of rags that was standing there adorning the right of way.
"Him and me was pardners, see! down there where the world goes round,
And I been waitin' for him to come—but mebby he stopped to play."

"You are late," said the angel; "one year late!" The hobo's face grew red.
"Well, who was holdin' the watch on me when I saved me pal, was you?
Just figure his side—if the pup had died a-savin' me life instead,
Now wouldn't he wait for his missin' mate till he seen I was comin', too?"

Sadly the angel shook his head and lifted the portal bar.
"One minute more and the scribe will strike your name from the roll sublime."
When suddenly up came a yellow pup, hopping from star to star,
Wagging his tail as he sniffed the trail that his master had had to climb.

Then, something slipped in the scheme of things—a comet came frisking by;
One of the loco dog-star breed turned loose for a little chase;
The puppy stared as the comet flared, then started across the sky,
As the flickering comet tucked his tail—and never was such a race.

Round the heavens and back again flew comet and pup, unchecked;
The Great Bear growled and the sun dogs howled. Astronomers had begun
To rub their eyes in a wild surmise that their records were incorrect,
When the puppy, crossing his master's track, stopped short, and the race was done.

Singed and sorry and out of breath he mounted the starry trail,
And trotted to where his master stood by the gate to the Promised Land;
"'Twas a flamin' run and you scared him, son, for you made him tuck his tail!"
And the hobo patted the puppy's head with a soiled but forgiving hand.

Then slowly the Gates dissolved in air and the twain were left alone
On a road that wound through flowers and fields and under a shady tree.
"Now this is like we'd 'a' made it, tike. And I reckon it's all our own,
And nothin' to do but ramble, pal, which is heaven for you and me."

Heaven—save that the hobo felt a kind of uneasy pride,
As he pushed his halo a bit aslant and gazed at his garments strange.
But the pup knew naught that a change was wrought since crossing the Great Divide,
For the heart of a dog—and he love a man—may never forget, nor change.

Baldy Red Comes Back Strong

By Francis J. Dickie

A commentary on bone-dry prohibition, showing how you have got to fight alcohol with something besides legal restriction. The ingenuity of criminals is beyond calculation

SLOUCHED far down in a big, soft leather chair in the sunny little rotunda of the St. James Hotel, Northtown, Baldy Red sat staring aimlessly out into the busy street, in his eyes a desperate brooding, a look of fierce struggle, as though he strove for answer to a most puzzling riddle.

It was late of an early June afternoon, and stilly hot. So hot that even the untiring tongue of the green parrot, hanging in a great gilt cage at one corner of the room, was for the time being silent; so hot that even Baldy Red had yielded to the unusual action of removing his heavy, wide-brimmed, black, soft Stetson, the high crown fourdented, and ending in a sharp point, molding the pliable felt into an odd, pyramid shape, with gouged-out sides.

As he sprawled there, shoulders sagging, head so drooped that his chin rested on sunken chest, the man resembled most some huge turtle, what of bald dome, accentuated the more by a narrow little strip of bristling hair of flaming red, extending from ear to ear in faintly curving line above a short neck. His shirt was blue, tieless, and open at the neck.

Yet, red as was that wistful wisp of hair, it failed to vie with the glory of his facial skin. Baldy Red had been for years his own best customer of smuggled whisky—Northern whisky of a vileness unequaled in all the world, beside which that famed brand of Kentucky, one administered drop of which was claimed would make a rabbit challenge a bulldog, was as mild as best Jersey's milk. Much imbibing of strong liquor, combined with many seasons of braving the fierce summer suns and bitter winter winds of the country in the basins of the Peace and Athabasca Rivers, had created this countenance of stormy sunset hue; and this, overlaid by baldest pate, had won for him title of Baldy Red. To it, in fairness, might have been added: "Booze Smuggler Extraordinary," for he was the cleverest carrier of illicit spirits into forbidden territory than the Canadian Northwest had ever produced; a fact which the government spotters and mounted police bore chagrined witness to through many times being outwitted.

But even the wisest and wariest laid plans sometimes fail; and one of Baldy's best had come to grief shortly following his stepping aboard the steamer *Echo* at Athabasca Landing ten days before.

The frontier town of Athabasca Landing, one hundred miles north of Northtown City, was the border line, beyond which prohibited-whisky territory began and extended for twenty-five hundred miles north clear to the Arctic Sea. Though no railroad had as yet penetrated the country on that May day in 1913, when Baldy Red walked aboard the steamer *Echo*, a wonderful system of navigable inland waterways made access to the region fairly easy. And in the lower part of this country was a vast army of thirsty souls—freighters, voyageurs, fur traders, prospectors, hundreds of recent homesteaders, and small ranchers, and the native half-breeds.

So the region circumjacent to the Peace and Athabasca Rivers and Lesser Slave Lake was a territory of rich pickings for successful bootleggers. Whisky here brought from ten to thirty dollars a bottle, the value gradually ris-

ing the farther the distance north. Exorbitant as were these prices, the bootleggers found always eager buyers and an unlimited market, for the bibacity of Northmen is unequaled by residents of any part of the globe—South Sea traders not excepted.

With liquor herein commanding a minimum of ten dollars a bottle, which same could be bought in the liquor stores at Northtown for a dollar, the smugglers could have made fair profit even by selling the purest and best of spirits—and Canadian whisky is the best distilled on the American continent. But the risk was great, and the government fines extremely heavy whenever the bootleggers were captured. So to make up for this, whatever pure spirits the smugglers did get through, became a strangely amplified concoction before it reached the Northern purchaser.

Baldy's particular recipe was a gallon of genuine whisky, ten pounds of burned sugar, two plugs of chewing tobacco, a pound of soda, and eight gallons of water. From this he manufactured ten gallons of liquid on an outlay of some four dollars; this high-powered beverage eventually netting him one hundred.

On that May afternoon, ten days previously, when he had stepped on deck of the *Echo*, inland bound down the Athabasca, there had also come on board two small, oblong, white, pine boxes of cased dynamite, fifty pounds to the box, consigned for Peter Jones of Lesser Slave Lake Settlement. Of all the freight that piled high the decks of the light-draft, stern-wheel steamer, these alone were handled gently by the overworked deck hands; at all times rough handlers of freight.

From Athabasca Landing the *Echo* ran down the Athabasca River to the mouth of the Lesser Slave River, then up the Slave as far as the settlement of Mirror Landing. A bad rapid here necessitated an overland transfer of all the goods to the *Call*, another, larger steamer which ran the rest of the river's distance to Sawridge Village, at the head of Lesser Slave Lake, and then proceeded on up the lake, touching at various tiny places, and finally the village of Lesser Slave Lake, the largest and most important place of the region, surrounded as it was by much farming land, and being also the center depot for incoming fur shipments. For this region, the village had been always Baldy Red's headquarters.

Three days after embarking on the Echo at Athabasca Landing, Baldy Red had disembarked from the *Call* at Lesser Slave. Almost continually traveling though he was, he carried not even a hand valise. Hardly had he stepped upon the dock when Sergeant McNulty, of the mounted police, came sauntering up and hailed him with lazy greeting: "Hello, Baldy, back again, eh?"

"As you see," Baldy answered, as he did so catching sight of Billy Murphy, head of the government secret-service liquor investigation department, carefully inspecting the various consignments of unloading freight.

"No freight, no baggage this time, Baldy?" the sergeant went on, good-naturedly jocular; but underneath the velvet of his raillery Baldy knew full well were eager claws.

The smuggler shook his head. At this, the policeman had run an experienced hand over Baldy's person, and then, meeting with no questionable, hidden, bottle shape, turned away.

With nonchalant air, Baldy had proceeded for some distance up the faintly sloping incline of the little settlement's single street to where the Royal George stopping house raised its glaring, green-painted two stories of gaunt, oblong board framework, a garish structure, the more striking by reason of the surrounding low cabins, with whitewashed walls.

For three long sunshiny days Baldy had loafed aimlessly about the Royal George, never going a dozen yards beyond the door. Seated generally in one of the plain rotunda chairs upon the long veranda, feet upon the rail, chair slightly tipped back, he had placidly smoked the hours away, watching the horde of half-breed children playing in the dust of the narrow street, or listening to endless tale and argument of

the little group of old-timers who gathered daily for an hour or so and idled in the sun.

Occasionally he was aware of the passing of Sergeant McNulty, and once Inspector Billy Murphy, and of their sidelong, appraising glances. But on the third evening, just at the supper hour, noting the street was quite deserted, Baldy had strolled lazily out. Assuring himself no hostile eyes watched him, he quickened his pace and proceeded down to the wharf and into the freight room of the Northland Navigation Company, close to the door of which the edge of the primitive bush began. Back in that bush, a quarter of a mile away, hidden, secluded, on a sidehill of "hog's back" ridge, was a tiny dugout, known only to Baldy Red; from out of the dingy bowels of which had come many a gallon of poisonous brew of his manufacturing.

As he stepped within the long freight room, Baldy had noted that much of the goods he had seen unloaded from the *Call* three days previously still lay unclaimed. But what his eyes sought was not there. Inwardly perturbed, but outwardly calm, he had faced the agent entering a moment later from another room. The agent was a stranger, a new man appointed some weeks previously, a fact noted at the time by Baldy Red, and upon which the success of his venture depended, for to the former agent, Baldy's face and name had been familiar.

"My name's Jones, Peter Jones. I'm homesteading back beyond"—here Baldy had jerked his head toward the tree line—"and I was kinda expecting a couple cases of dynamite in on the last boat. Need it for stumping, you know. But I don't see it. Maybe it didn't come."

"Oh, yes; yes, they're here. I stuck them in the other room, and put fur bales around them. Kind of skeery stuff, dynamite. Hate to have it round. I'm always afraid something'll fall on it and set it off. So I packed it away. Do you want it now?"

Nodding, Baldy had assisted in the unearthing, paid the freight, and with a box under each powerful arm stepped cautiously to the street. No one was in sight. Into the shadow of the tree line he had slipped. With rapid steps he hurried through the narrow aisles of the close-ranked trees. Then suddenly, when he had put perhaps a hundred feet behind him, there had risen as if from the bowels of the earth the smiling face and resolute form of Sergeant McNulty and, a second later from a near distant willow clump, the sharp face of Inspector Billy Murphy.

After the trial two days later, Baldy Red had come away from the scene of his disastrous venture to Northtown almost penniless from a fine of two hundred and fifty dollars. But the money loss was as nothing to that of the confiscation of his two dozen quart bottles of whisky, so snugly packed under guise of dangerous dynamite. Yet even these things, combined, hurt not as much as the pain of his injured pride. For Baldy Red was a temperamental worker, joying in the excitement of the game, glorying in each fresh running the gantlet of the scattered line of government men who guarded vigilantly each point of entry into forbidden land. He was proud of his prowess; proud of his till now unbroken record of successful operations.

In the early days he had shipped liquor within the frozen carcasses of many a pig; had shipped it in a specially constructed barrel that was apparently filled with kerosene, but which had held securely fastened, directly in the center, a tiny keg; had shipped it in by the dozens of bottles within the heart of made-to-order bales of wired hay. These and a dozen other ways his keen mind had invented. But all those things were in the past now.

With every passing day, the government agents and the mounted police were growing more rigid in their examination of everything shipped into the Northland, making the successes of ancient days no longer possible. And through their unexpected vigilance, their almost uncanny foresight, his latest and best "dynamite" idea was now revealed and forever useless, for Baldy

knew that already, even long before he reached Northtown, this new and brilliant conception of his would have been passed all along the line of the various posts from Mirror to Sawridge, from Sawridge to every point on Lesser Slave, and to McMurray and the distant settlements along the Peace.

So now, as he sat in this quiet little hotel rotunda at Northtown, three hundred miles distant from the scene of his recent defeat, Baldy was troubled. All afternoon he had pondered, pondered, vainly seeking inspiration. But presently, when the big clock toned the half hour after four, the brooding, fiercely searching light that had burned in his eyes the past few hours, died out. The great idea refused to come.

He straightened up slowly, his very movement spelling the dejection he felt. Upright in his chair, his left hand reached for his hat, tossed a while back into the leather seat next to him. As he lifted it, his eye fell upon a paper, the *Morning Bulletin,* lying crumpled, and till now hidden beneath the wide brim. Baldy seldom read the daily papers, or anything, for that matter, and he was about to arise when a heading caught his eye:

FAMOUS OLD-TIMER TAKES FIRST AUTO INTO THE NORTHLAND.

Baldy picked up the paper, smoothed it out, and read the news story beneath relating how Robert Hobbs, wealthy Northman, at present a guest at the King Edward Hotel, was shipping from Northtown the next day, a seven-passenger touring car to his home at Lesser Slave Lake Village.

A long time after he had finished reading the featured item, Baldy sat staring queerly before him. Slowly a light grew in his watery blue eyes. At last he dropped the paper and rose briskly. Twenty minutes later found him closeted in the back room of the Western Club with its proprietor, "Big" Jake Munroe. As Baldy Red and many of his kind were good spenders, and lost regularly against the various games of chance, stud and draw poker, faro bank, roulette and black jack, which Big Jake operated, the genial gambler was seldom averse to staking any of them when in hard luck, knowing full well that not only would the debt be fully repaid when next the debtor was flush, but the borrower would likely as not spend an equal if not greater amount around the Western Club; all of which was good for Big Jake.

An hour after this meeting found Baldy Red at the desk of the King Edward Hotel inquiring for Mr. Robert Hobbs. It was just supper time, and the clerk informed him Mr. Hobbs had only a moment ago come in from the street and gone to his room. Learning the number Baldy stepped into the elevator and ascended to the desired number. Hobbs, he knew, was a good-natured, rather unsuspecting middle-aged gentleman, and although Baldy's acquaintance was based only on seeing the man half a dozen times in the past, he felt supremely confident of succeeding in what he had in mind.

As the door opened, following his rap, and the rather long and melancholy face of Hobbs looked out upon him inquiringly, Baldy opened fire with his conversational battery.

"Why, how are you Mr. Hobbs!" he roared cordially in his loud, hearty out-of-doors voice. As he spoke, he stepped calmly into the room and without giving the other opportunity to reply, rattled merrily on: "I just saw in the paper about your taking a car up to the Settlement, and as a North country booster myself, I just felt I must rush right up and tell you you've got the right idea. I tell you, you're the kind of men the North country wants—progressive, pushing. Why"—Baldy gushed on with greater speed and he warmed to his theme—"just think what it means, this auto in that land just opening out under settlement. It'll set an example to others who can afford one. And"—here Baldy's voice became vastly impressive—"and what follows the coming of autos? Better roads, Mr. Hobbs; better roads. And with better roads comes increased travel, and with increased travel more meetings of the settlers, a closer neighborliness, a get-

ting together of the people on all matters that need attention for the common good. Yes, sir, you've done a big thing, and I for one want to congratulate you."

During this furious assault of oratory, Mr. Hobbs' eyes, momentarily coldly questioning, became sparkling; his rather melancholy face slowly lighted, till, when Baldy's last word died away, it was positively beaming.

Cheered by this, Baldy proceeded to make victory conclusive by reaching out his great right hand. Imprisoning Mr. Hobbs', he shook it with the ardor of a campaigning politician. And Mr. Hobbs, completely carried away, readjusted his first impression that his visitor was an utter stranger; and though still unable to place either Baldy's face or name, he put it down to his beastly bad memory of both such details. Doubtless, he thought, his visitor was some of the recent settlers who had flocked into the Lesser Slave Lake district. However, not wishing to display lack of recognition of one whom he had probably met and forgotten, particularly as he was so appreciative a fellow, Mr. Hobbs returned the handgrip cordially, replying after a minute:

"Thanks, thanks; I'm sure it's very good of you to say so."

That his action would have been viewed in such light had never previously occurred to him. Now, however, he seized upon it with all the eagerness of the bourgeois to take credit for meritorious intention: "Something along the lines you mention was my idea, too, and I hope, as you predict, that it will encourage others to equip themselves with this most handy method of transportation, which always brings in its wake a movement for better roads; a thing we certainly need all throughout the Lesser Slave Lake farming district."

"I see you're going in the morning," Baldy went on, dropping into a chair, while Mr. Hobbs, closing the door, also seated himself.

"No; not me, just the car. I had hoped to go along, but some business holds me over. However, I wrote two of my men to meet the boat with a team and draw the car up to my house. You see, the intention to take a car in did not come on the spur of the moment with my arrival here last week. I have been considering it for some time; in fact, I already have a neat little garage built and waiting for it upon the farm."

"It's too bad though you couldn't have gone along with it and drove it right from the dock up to your home; made sort of a triumphal entry of it, so to speak."

Mr. Hobbs heaved a sigh. "Yes; that was my original intention. I rather fancy it would have created quite a stir in our village. But I'd made all arrangements to ship, before I found I couldn't get away, so I'll have to let it go."

The silly old doughhead, Baldy thought to himself, all he's bought that car for was to swell it over the rest of the country round.

But his face betrayed not his thoughts, and he turned attentive and interested face as Mr. Hobbs rambled on.

"But I'll sure have a good time this summer. I'm taking up everything I need—repairing tools of all descriptions, a pair of extra tires, and two barrels of gasoline, beside a tank already full." Then, struck with a sudden thought: "By the way, I'm taking my last drive to-night. In the morning the garage people will ship her to Athabasca Landing by early freight in time to catch the *Echo* the next day. Would you like to join me in my spin to-night?"

"I sure would be delighted."

"Very well then, and, as I'm just going down to supper and the car is to be brought to the hotel at seven-thirty, you might as well join me at supper."

Following supper, Baldy Red climbed into the front seat of the big seven-passenger touring car beside Mr. Hobbs; and for three long hours sat in a cold sweat, his heart continually in his mouth, while the genial amateur at the wheel drove his desperate way through avenues sometimes crowded, sometimes deserted, now just missing

a trolley car, now a pedestrian, street-corner curb or telegraph pole—but always missing, an occurrence that Baldy Red became almost sorry for as the time grew late.

But at last, some few minutes after ten, Mr. Hobbs drove to the garage, put the car in, and together they walked back to the King Edward Hotel. Hardly had Baldy Red bidden his host good night and seen Mr. Hobbs pass into the hotel, than he was once more on his way back to the somewhat distant garage.

Arrived there, he talked for some time with the greasy individual in sole charge at night. Following the conversation, the greasy one pocketed a crackling bill largely embossed with the numeral X, and Baldy Red proceeded downtown, to return again shortly with an express wagon and a mysterious load. Three toilsome hours he spent with the greasy one, then went homeward to bed. As he walked down the silent street under the soft dusk of the Northern summer's night, he sang for the first time in many days a little song of his own composing, an oddly philosophical ditty born of his quaint mode of life:

"Neither be too simple nor too wise
If on this old earth you'd rise
If your hair's turning gray
And you're broke on your last day,
You've been either too simple or wise."

Once again, a few days later, Baldy Red stepped from the steamer *Call* onto the dock at Lesser Slave Lake settlement. Sergeant McNulty and Inspector Murphy were there as usual, but they paid Baldy not the slightest attention, confining themselves to minutest examination of every piece of unloading freight. With a faint smile the bootlegger saw them pry off the tops of even the gasoline barrels billed to so respectable a citizen as Mr. Hobbs, and poke with exploring stick to their veriest depths. But when they extended their examination to the car after it was run onto the dock, Baldy's eyes narrowed, and he sat up a little straighter on the stringer from behind which he could watch unobserved.

Seat cushions they pulled up; opened tool boxes; raised the hood and peered into every nook and crevice around the engine, and lastly unscrewed the top of the water jacket and raised that of the gasoline tank, sniffing each suspiciously.

But at last Baldy breathed easier, and watched with contemplative eyes two farmer boys hitch on their team and draw the car in state up the narrow dusty road through the village to the home of Mr. Hobbs on the outskirts, a quarter of a mile away.

That night had the eyes of Sergeant McNulty and Inspector Murphy—as they lay in ambush watching the freight door of the Northland Navigation Company—been turned instead upon the neat little garage of Mr. Hobbs some half mile away, they might have seen, under cover of the late-coming, faint dark of summer night peculiar to the region, Baldy Red slip out from it and disappear silently and swiftly into the edge of the bush line farther on, carrying on his either shoulder an auto tire, which extra pair had been lashed so innocently at the back of the big car on its arrival some hours before.

And had they been afforded the opportunity of sitting in the private office of Big Jake Munroe in the Western Club, Northtown, some three weeks later they might have overheard Baldy Red make this chuckling comment to Big Jake, as he concluded his story and rose to leave after paying recent borrowing:

"Of course, I took old Hobbs back his extra tires that same night, but he'll have to ship them back here to Northtown and get some new valves in his inner tubes, for the ones me and that garage fellow rigged up to filter in that twenty gallons of booze, will sure never take the nozzle of an air pump."

All of which would have been highly interesting to Messieurs McNulty and Murphy, explaining to them as it would a certain unaccountable outbreak of drunkenness that had but recently swept the Lesser Slave Lake district.

A Chat With You

IT is hard to realize how much the world is waking up and how much fuller the lives of people are becoming. We don't get the new order in its fullest sway on this side of the water. You have to be in the overseas forces—preferably in the aviation, to really be able to say with conviction, "This is the life!" Last winter Ralph Paine was standing in a field somewhere in Scotland. He had gone abroad to gather material about the war. A snowstorm was raging, but through the gale Paine heard the drumming of an aëroplane, and presently one appeared out of the clouds and slid down to a landing in the field. The two young men who jumped out wore electrically heated clothing, but even so they were half frozen from the chilly altitudes they had been coursing and had landed to get warmed up a little. They had little time to waste. It was late in the afternoon. That morning they had left England, reached the Belgian coast, fought two German machines, one after the other, and sent them both down. Now they had to fly back to headquarters to report on their day's work. They were in an especial hurry, for after they had made the report they were planning to fly on down to London, get into evening clothes, have a big dinner at a good hotel, and afterward take in a musical comedy. From their manner, this appeared to be a specimen day and nothing out of the ordinary. It was not so long ago that a man who flew from England to Scotland or across the Channel was considered to have accomplished the feat of a lifetime. But now, for these aviators, it is just a trip into town for dinner and the theater after the day's work is over.

THERE are other branches of the air service than the scouts or fighters, and no less interesting. There is an air intelligence system under naval control. The hero of J. Storer-Clouston's new novel, "The Man from the Clouds," is connected with this branch of the service. When he is dropped through the clouds with his parachute he has an idea he is landing in Germany. As a matter of fact, he is landed on one of the misty islands of the west of Scotland. His quick wits, in the first moment after he lands in the fog, tell him that there is something to be learned here if he keeps his identity secret. It is a racy, stirring story, with a nice girl in it, with a lot of dramatic incident and with a baffling mystery. Perhaps you remember Clouston's former novel, "The Spy in Black," which appeared in THE POPULAR six months ago. "The Man from the Clouds" is an even better story. It is a full-length, dollar-and-a-half book, and will appear complete in the next

issue of THE POPULAR. Storer-Clouston is no ordinary writer of adventure fiction. He has a sense of humor, a knack of introducing his readers to interesting people, a grace, a clarity, a distinction that make one of his novels the best sort of companion for an evening at home with a pipe, a good light, and a comfortable chair. If you happen to be a lady who hasn't gone in for cigarettes, let alone pipes, you will find the story just as good. We wouldn't mind reading it over again.

WE are fond of detective stories. We believe all great minds share this taste with us. We are continuously reading of great scientists, statesmen, and men of affairs who spend their leisure hours unraveling mysteries. What we want in the way of detective stories, however, is a little originality. Too many tales have been written on the form of the old Sherlock Holmes stories. We like something different. We have it in Howard Fielding's new story, "Bill, the Owl." It is a murder-mystery story of a new sort. There are drugs, sudden death, underworld politics, a wonderful unfinished manuscript to which no one can devise an end, a beautiful but mysterious widow, and a lot of other attractive ingredients in this new three-part story which starts in the next issue. It is hard to lay aside, the characters are interesting, there is plenty of stirring incident, and surprises on every page.

JUST to jump away from war and mystery, for a moment, we want you to read the story, "His Work," by W. A. Fraser, which appears in the next issue. If you happen to be an engineer by profession you will be especially attracted by the tale, but no one with human sympathy could read it without interest and thrill. It is a really big, strong story of a bridge builder and his work, with an ending half pathetic, half triumphant. W. A. Fraser is an engineer and bridge builder as well as a great writer.

IN the next issue of the magazine there is another story of army life by Raymond Brown, "The Sight of Blood." Also there is another full-speed story of the navy, "Alias Aloha Al," by Clarence L. Cullen. There is another short story of adventure, "A Change of Venue," by Henry C. Rowland. If you like golf or golf stories, look for "The Man Who Came Back to Wildwood," by O. F. Lewis. It is even more than a story of golf: a story of human people and human interest and the drama of life. Then there is a funny baseball story, "Too Honest," by Thomas McMorrow. This is by no means all. Altogether, it's a great number of the magazine and you'd better order your copy now.

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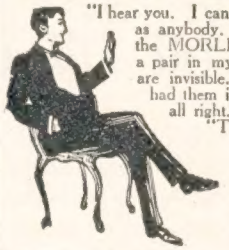

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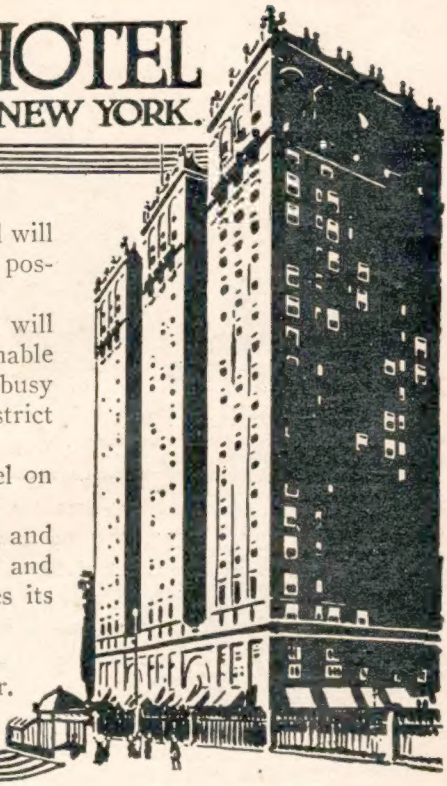

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